‘Pre-Eminently a Woman’s Question’?

Discourses on Vegetarianism in and Connected to *The Vote* between 1909 and 1918.

Saara Kallio

Maisterintutkielma

Historian maisteriohjelma

Humanistinen tiedekunta

Helsingin Yliopisto

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Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena on valottaa 1900-luvun alun brittiläisten suffragettien ajatuksia kasvissyönnistä sekä tarkastella niitä tapoja, joilla kasvissyöntiä heidän keskuudessaan sukupuolitettiin vuosina 1909-1918. Tutkimuksen keskiössä on militantin Women's Freedom League- yhdistyksen (tästä eteenpäin WFL) *The Vote*-lehdessä käydyt keskustelut kasvissyönnistä sekä siihen läheisesti liittyvä muu kirjoittelu aiheesta.

Sukupuoli-käsitteen määrittelyssä on hyödynnetty Judith Butlerin teoriaa sukupuolen performatiivisuudesta sekä sen jatkuvasti muokkautuvasta rakenteesta. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on pohtia sukupuolen merkitystä kasvissyönnistä käydyissä keskusteluissa ja vastata kysymyksiin siitä, miten kasvissyöntiin ja myös sen vastakohtaan, lihansyöntiin, liitettiin ajatuksia feminiinisyydestä, maskuliinisuudesta sekä myös feminismistä. Lisäksi tutkielma tarkastelee kasvissyönnin asemaa WFL:n virallisessa toiminnassa. Tutkimuksessa analysoin sukupuoleen sekä feminiinisyyteen ja maskuliinisuuteen liittyviä käsitteitä, joita näiden kasvissyöntiin liittyvien kirjoitusten kautta nousee esiin tutkimuskirjallisuuden avulla. Aineistona toimi *The Vote* -lehden lisäksi myös muita WFL:n jäsenten tai toisten *The Vote* -lehdessä esiintyneiden naisten kirjoituksia kasvissyönnistä tai sitä sivuten. Tämän lisäksi vastapainona suffragettien kirjoituksille on käytetty *Daily Mirror* -lehteä sekä kahta miespuolisen kirjoittajan aikalaisteosta kasvissyönnistä.

Osoitan tutkimuksessani, että kasvissyönti oli näkyvässä roolissa sekä WFL:n lehdessä että sen virallisessa toiminnassa, vaikkakaan ei voida olettaa sen olleen yhdistyksen enemmistöä edustava aate. Siinä missä kasvissyönti on jo aiemmissa tutkimuksissa yhdistetty suffragettien toimintaan, syventää tämä tutkimus ymmärrystä nimenomaan WFL:n sisäisestä kasvissyöntiaktivismista ja -kirjoittelusta. Tutkimuksen kautta ilmenee, että kasvissyönti oli näkyvää sekä WFL:n jäsenten keskuudessa kuin myös yhdistyksen hallinnollisella tasolla. Kasvissyönti oli huomattavassa asemassa WFL:n toiminnassa: yhdistyksen perustamat kahvilat ja ravintolat tarjoilivat periaatteellisista syistä pelkästään kasvisruokaa ja mainostivat myös kursseja joissa opetellaan kasvisruoan valmistamista. Myös WFL:n kaupallisessa toiminnassa nimenomaan kasvisruoan merkitys korostui. WFL tarjosi myös luentoja ja ruoanlaittodemonstraatioita aiheeseen liittyen. Kasvisruokavalioon liittyi keskeisesti oletus sen terveellisyydestä sekä myös sen potentiaalista kansakuntaa sivistävänä voimana, kun taas liha yhdistettiin aggressioon, alkoholismiin, erinäisiin sairauksiin sekä mahdolliseen moraaliseen rappioon.

Siinä missä kasvissyönnin omaksumista kannustettiin terveyttä edistävänä ja sen potentiaalia köyhien yhteiskuntaluokkien ravintoarvoja parantavana tekijänä nostettiin esiin, oli WFL:n kasvissyönnistä käydyissä keskusteluissa ehdottomana periaatteena kasvissyönnin täysi vapaaehtoisuus sekä yksilön päätösvallan korostaminen. Kasvissyönnistä käydyissä keskusteluissa korostui myös yksilövastuu sekä ajatus ruohonjuuritason aktivismin tärkeydestä.

Tutkimuksesta käy myös ilmi että kasvissyönti yhdistettiin voimakkaasti sukupuoleen, ja että jo ensimmäisen aallon brittiläisten feministien keskuudessa kasvissyönti liitettiin feministisiin ajatuksiin naisten ja eläinten aseman samankaltaisuudesta hyvin samoilla linjoilla kuin Carol J. Adams argumentoi 1990-luvun ekofeministisessä teoksessaan *The Sexual Politics of Meat.* Suffragettien keskuudessa kasvissyönnin nähtiin olevan erityisen merkittävä nimenomaan naisille ja sen edustavan askelta kohti laajempaa yhteiskunnallista tasa-arvoa. Kasvissyönti, ja toisaalta myös lihansyönti, liitettiin myös sukupuolitettuihin ajatuksiin patriotismista ja kansallisesta identiteetistä. Osoitan tässä tutkimuksessa, että suffragetit kävivät keskustelua lihaan liitetyistä kulttuurisista assosiaatioista ja torjuivat oletuksen lihasta maskuliinisena tai miehekkäänä ruokana. Samalla he hylkäsivät ajatuksen naisten oletetusti pienemmästä proteiinintarpeesta.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
Suffragetit, kasvissyönti, sukupuoli, feminiinisyys, maskuliinisuus, Women's Freedom League, Britannia, naisten äänioikeus, liha.

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Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of discourses and ideas relating to vegetarianism amongst British suffragettes in the Edwardian era and during the First World War, comprising the years 1909-1918, with a particular emphasis on perceptions of gender. Before starting this work I had read that the membership of the Vegetarian Society was largely male, and this got me interested in whether vegetarianism was indeed gendered during this era and how, if at all, this could be seen in texts about vegetarianism.[1] It soon became clear that the general consensus among historians was that vegetarianism was perhaps not particularly seen as a man's cause, but instead it was to be found in progressive circles, among socialists and activists. In addition, a persistent connection started becoming evident in these texts, namely one between vegetarianism and the cause for women's suffrage. The stereotypical vegetarian, where gender was mentioned, was a suffragette.[2]

My specific interest in this study lies in the social and cultural meanings ascribed to food and the ways that diet and certain food products were given gendered meanings through language. One of the suffrage organisations, the Women's Freedom League (WFL), seemed to be a particular centre of active vegetarian members, and it is therefore on their vegetarian writing and activity that I will concentrate. I want to explore how these suffragettes wrote about vegetarianism, why they wrote about the subject and what kinds of meaning and values they connected to the vegetarian diet. In order to look at vegetarianism I will sometimes also need to look outside of it, to discussions on meat and also

[1] See for example Gregory (2007), p. 164, listing the Manchester Vegetarian Society membership between 1895-1899 as 80% male.

[2] For contemporary references, see for example the *Daily Mirror,* 30 October 1909, p. 4; 25 August 1909, p. 12 and 11 January 1913, p. 7. For academic observations see for example Leneman (1997), pp. 271-2; Matheson-Pollock, and Graham-Matheson (2020), p. 40; Twigg (1981); also Dixon (2001), p. xi.

debates on nutrition, food and cooking more broadly. I am particularly interested to see whether gender was a factor considered in the suffragettes' writing about vegetarianism and meat: was vegetarianism discussed differently by men and women, and how, if at all, do debates about vegetarianism reflect ideas of gender? Additionally, my emphasis will be on the official vegetarian activity of the WFL: how did its newspaper, *The Vote*, engage with the topic, and how was vegetarianism visible on an organisational level? How significant was the vegetarian activity of the WFL? Finally I want to concentrate on WFL president Charlotte Despard, arguably the most influential member of the League, and consider how vegetarianism was connected to her greater vision for feminism and gender relations and whether her personal convictions reflected on the WFL's course on vegetarianism.

The emphasis of this thesis is on the WFL and it is therefore their newspaper, *The Vote,* that will be the main focus of this study. Many of the women considered in this thesis represent the militant wing of the suffrage movement and are therefore referred to as 'suffragettes', but I also want to consider some of the constitutional campaigners or 'suffragists'. Organisations considered here are the constitutional National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the two militant organisations: the Pankhursts' Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and, in richer detail, the Women's Freedom League (WFL) led by Charlotte Despard. This study also includes some women that cannot with any certainty be proven to be members of any of the suffrage organisations, yet had demonstrable links to both the women's suffrage campaign and vegetarianism, and expressed sympathy to the suffragettes' aims and objectives.

Alongside *The Vote* I will also explore some other texts written by vegetarian women, namely Hallie Miles, Lady Constance Lytton and Annie Besant, to give more depth to the question of how women involved with the women's suffrage campaign reflected on vegetarianism and connected it to ideas of gender. Hallie Miles was a well-known vegetarian educator, writer and restaurateur who also collaborated with the WFL as an event facilitator and contributed some opinion pieces to *The Vote.* Lady Constance Lytton was a militant suffragette in the

WSPU, a known vegetarian and frequently discussed in *The Vote*. Annie Besant, on the other hand, was the president of the Theosophical Society, a vegetarian advocate and a member of the NUWSS. I have selected these women due to their position as public figures who are also vegetarians as well as the availability of their writings, but also due to their proximity to the WFL or to topics written about in *The Vote*. This provides an opportunity to more deeply understand the discourses and phenomena present in the discussions on vegetarianism amongst the suffragettes.

To see how vegetarianism was treated in the mainstream media I have also studied the *Daily Mirror* for references to vegetarianism for the same years as *The Vote*, 1909 to 1918.[3] The membership of the WFL consisted mostly of middle class women and was generally fairly left-leaning.[4] The readership of the *Daily Mirror* was characterised as being mainly middle class and politically situated in the centre-left during this period.[5] Their target audiences are by no means identical but sufficiently similar to justify the use of the Daily Mirror as an example of a general interest newspaper aimed at a readership coming from a similar socio-economic background to that of *The Vote*.

It is also important to clarify that the term 'vegetarian' is used in this study to describe those who exclude meat products by choice, not through necessity. The time span covers the years of the First World War, during which meat was scarce. People who lived a practically vegetarian life during the war years due to meat shortages or rationing are not considered here. The time span studied was decided for two reasons: it starts at the establishment of *The Vote* in 1909, and finishes with the limited enfranchisement of women in Britain in 1918. The WFL continued campaigning for decades after this, but because of the changes brought about by the war and the partial gaining of the vote the emphasis of

[3] The WFL was established in 1907 but *The Vote* only started to be published in 1909.
[4] Frances (2000), pp. 181, 183.
[5] The Daily Mirror readership as described at the British Newspaper Archive at https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/daily-mirror, last accessed 8 September 2020.

campaigning changed after 1918, and that is why I have decided to end my research there.

Vegetarianism has gained increasing attention both in the media as well as in academic research over the last few decades, however it was certainly not a new movement in the early twentieth century. Writing on the topic threads through history all the way from ancient Greece to modern day. Rod Preece, Tristram Stuart and Colin Spencer have contributed anthologies covering the last two thousand years of vegetarian thought, whereas James Gregory has looked at vegetarianism in nineteenth-century Britain.[6] Although some women are discussed in these texts, such as Anna Kingsford and Mary Shelley, the majority of the people explored were male. Much research exists on vegetarianism during the Victorian period, both in Britain as well as more generally in the Western world. This era does offer a particularly interesting point of study, as a more organised vegetarian movement is born during the nineteenth century with the birth of the Vegetarian Society in Britain and many other in Europe, and the establishment of dozens of vegetarian restaurants across European cities.[7]

The Edwardian period and the years of the First World War have received significantly less attention with regard to vegetarianism. Leah Leneman's article 'The Awakened Instinct' stands out as research concentrating specifically on suffragettes and vegetarianism.[8] It is a rich source for tracing the many women shunning meat within the movement for women's suffrage. She establishes the connection between the official suffrage campaigns and vegetarianism, and explores a diverse collection of sources on the topic of meat eating, animal rights and their relationship to Edwardian feminists. She shows that a link between the subjugation of women and that of animals was observed in suffrage circles, and

[6] Preece (2008); Stuart (2008); Spencer (1994); Gregory (2007).

[7] During the Edwardian period and the First World War there were two separate Vegetarian Societies: one in London and one in Manchester, as well as many local vegetarian associations and groups. The Manchester Vegetarian Society was the first to be established. Members might belong to a number of vegetarian societies: there are for example references of WFL president Charlotte Despard attending meetings of both London and Manchester branches. I will from this point on refer to the Manchester Vegetarian Society as the Vegetarian Society (VS).

[8] Leneman (1997).

that vegetarianism was indeed promoted as a woman's cause by many. However, while Leneman thoroughly surveys the vegetarian connections of various suffrage organisations and their members, the stress is strongly on the human- and non-human animal connection emphasised by these writers. Less attention is given to how meat- or vegetable based diets were gendered beyond this, culturally or more specifically by suffragette writers, or the way these perceptions challenge or enforce existing ideas of gender, femininity and masculinity in connection to food outside questions of violence, empathy and objectification. Leneman's focus is on suffragists and suffragettes at large, whereas my interest lies specifically on the WFL and women who had close ties to it.

Many non-historically oriented subjects, specifically sociology as well as gender and cultural studies, have considered the connotations of vegetarianism and gender in contemporary society.[9] One of the most notable works is Carol J. Adams' book *The Sexual Politics of Meat – A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory,* which connects meat eating to ideas of masculinity, structures of power and patriarchy, painting vegetarianism a feminist choice. She describes the oppression of animals as parallel to the oppression and violence against women, pornography and women's position as 'second rate' humans in society.[10] Adams' thesis has been widely debated since its publication, and it has received criticism, among other things, for assuming a fixed and ahistorical approach and use of a simplistic, binary model of gender and failing to adapt a more intersectional approach.[11] She does, however, present interesting ideas of vegetarianism specifically as a feminist choice, and I will argue that some ideas expressed by Adams are mirrored in the writings present in *The Vote* in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Adams explores some examples of historical women's fiction dating to the period of interest here, but her emphasis is on the United States rather than Britain.

[9] See for example Lupton (1996); Twine (2010); Nath (2011).
[10] Adams (1990).

[11] Hamilton (2016), p. 115.

In historical research Bynum's study on gender and the cultural connections between food, eating, cooking and meat in Medieval England is notable and, I will argue, thematically still very relevant in the timeframe of this study.[12] Also Joy Dixon's study of theosophy explores themes of spirituality and femininity in Edwardian Britain, discussing the suffrage movement as well as vegetarianism in connection to the Theosophical Society (TS).[13] While Dixon's text provides a thorough analysis of the theosophical and spiritual connections of the suffragettes, this study will place these discourses in the context of the WFL and its writing on vegetarianism.

In this text I use the word 'feminism' in relation to a time period over a hundred years in the past from the date of writing. It is therefore essential to take a moment to consider the definition of the word as it is used in this work before moving ahead, because failing to contextualise the term leaves it both vulnerable to interpretation and risks anachronistic transferrals of its modern connotations to the past. The word was already in use during the Edwardian period, and can be seen frequently in the pages of *The Vote.* Interestingly *The Vote* states in the weekly 'What We Think'-section of the newspaper that '[w]e do not intend to confine ourselves simply to news of suffrage activities. The feminist movement has a wider scope than that…'[14] Feminism in this context, therefore, expands beyond the question of suffrage. Lucy Delap defines the use of the word 'feminism' during the Edwardian era as 'thoroughly contested', but 'frequently characterized as signifying a commitment to equality, inclusion, and liberal politics', and simultaneously connected to the 'advanced' section of the women's movement'.[15] This definition seems to suit the purposes of this study too, especially as the majority of the people studied and also the WFL as an organization might well be characterized as 'advanced', both for their progressive views as well as the commitment and extent to which they took these devotions to reform.

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[12] Bynum (1987).

[13] Dixon (2001).
[14] *The Vote* on 28 October 1909, p. 3.
[15] Delap (2004) p. 101.

As the theme of this thesis so clearly centres on the concept of gender, it is necessary to further expand on the use of this term also. I am influenced by Judith Butler's concept of gender as performative, meaning that I will look at gender as something that is a social, cultural and historical construct, fluid and ever in a state of flux and potential transformation, continually constructed and reconstructed. Gender and ideas of what it is to be a woman or a man, feminine or masculine or indeed something in between or outside of the binary definition of gender, is something that is performed by bodies through social and cultural influence and osmosis, through actions that are however regulated by the surrounding complex cultural and social networks, these pieces together building what constitutes 'gender'.[16] 'Sex' and 'gender' are not automatically synonymous, but instead 'sex' can be seen to refer to one's biological sex as reflected through their reproductive organs and physical appearance, whereas 'gender' refers to the identity or gender role adapted by an individual. However, my approach is to treat sex and gender as synonymous concepts in this text.

Because ideas of what is masculine or feminine change in the course of time, it is crucial to read primary texts for clues of what contemporary ideas of gender were and how bodies were gendered. I therefore treat gender in this text not as fixed, but rather as a living concept being observed in one of its states of being in this time in the past, reflected through the words and actions of the people studied. Additionally, when looking at gender in a feminist context, it can be expected that traditional gender roles and stereotypical ideas of gender might well be challenged. I will argue that through *The Vote* and the other feminist texts considered here unconventional, feminist, radical and novel interpretations of masculinity, femininity and the 'essence' of gender are expressed within their engagement with vegetarianism.

In the course of this thesis I will argue that discourses on vegetarianism did indeed have a gendered aspect to them, and that men and women employed

[16] Butler (1990, pp. 144-50.

different vocabularies and tried to persuade their audiences of the benefits of vegetarianism in slightly different ways. Additionally, I argue that Edwardian suffragette writers identified meat as an undeniably gendered and masculinised product, and that this cultural connection was rejected much earlier than has generally been acknowledged by historians. While vegetarianism can by no means be identified as a concern shared by the majority of WFL members, it nonetheless had a significant place in the formal organisational activity of the League. I will demonstrate that the WFL promoted vegetarianism on a subtle, but far wider and more systematic scale than has been previously noted through its vegetarian food establishments, functions and shop.

I believe that the suffragettes studied for this thesis saw vegetarianism as a feminist issue, but not necessarily as a female diet: cultural understandings of nutrition arise as centrally connected to the topic of equality, and also prompt questions of how bodies are gendered and whether this is necessary or acceptable. While the women studied here believed all people, regardless of gender, should adapt vegetarianism, the diet carried special importance to women due to its perceived links to promoting greater equality in society as well as women's positioning in a place of power in relation to questions of food.

I also argue that it is significant in considering the direction of the WFL's vegetarian engagements that much importance was placed on voluntarism and the importance of individual choice in choosing a vegetarian lifestyle. The discourses studied here highlight individual responsibility and types of grassroots action in promoting vegetarianism. I believe Charlotte Despard's devotion to vegetarianism influenced the League's course with the cause, but it alone does not explain the extent of the WFL's vegetarian activity. This thesis sheds light on the early stages of women's vegetarianism in a feminist context that could be seen as a precursor to modern ecofeminism. Vegetarianism and veganism are still highly visible topics in modern public discourses, and as such this study adds to our understanding of vegetarianism in a historical, specifically feminist context, making this thesis relevant in today's field of research.

This thesis will consist of four main chapters. In chapters one, two and three the connection to advertising, lectures and official WFL activity is used as a loose framework to enable a wider thematic discussion around issues that arise in the titular topics of exploration. The first chapter will provide an overview of the importance of food and some of the cultural and social values attached to food and eating before looking at popular perceptions of suffragettes and vegetarians as well as advertising in *The Vote.* I will then move on to the significant café- and restaurant culture of the suffrage movement that centred around vegetarian establishments. I will argue that the WFL purposefully connected vegetarianism to its formal activities and consider why it was seen as important enough to become part of the WFL's official business.

The second chapter will concentrate on the vegetarian Food Reform movement by considering topics of official lectures, talks and demonstrations as reported in the newspaper as well as the writings of a leading Food Reformer and WFL collaborator Hallie Miles. The emphasis on this chapter will be on how the Food Reform movement was presented to women, and how, within the discourses on vegetarianism, 'food reformers' engaged with the topic of gender. How were gendered ideas about dietary choices expressed, and what does this reveal about contemporary cultural ideas about men, women and food? Why was vegetarianism considered to be a women's issue?

The third chapter will focus on the war's impact on the WFL vegetarian activity and how *The Vote* engaged with the topic in the context of the war and the nationalistic fervour brought along with its outbreak. I specifically want to consider war, nationality and vegetarianism in the context of gender: were there different expectations for men and women when it came to meat consumption? Was vegetarianism connected to nationalism, and were there gendered expectations relating to food and nationalism? In this chapter I will also look at class and the gendered understanding of nutrition and meat as discussed in the political writing of *The Vote*. Additionally, I will consider the local level of the WFL's vegetarian actions and reflect on why historians have highlighted the importance of regional activity and how this relates to vegetarianism.

The last chapter will focus on Charlotte Despard, the president of the WFL, editor of *The Vote* and the first female president of the Vegetarian Society. She held a position of enormous visibility both as the leader of the organisation, an eccentric radical suffragette as well as an outspoken vegetarian, and I will argue that her devotion to vegetarianism notably contributed to the visibility of the 'cause' both within the WFL as well as more broadly through her nationally high profile as a militant suffragette. In this chapter I will specifically concentrate on Despard's involvement with theosophy, which has wider relevance as the Theosophical Society encouraged vegetarianism. Through Despard's spiritualism I will also focus on her ideas of gender, vegetarianism and the women's movement. What value did Charlotte Despard ascribe to vegetarianism, and how was this influenced by her views on theosophy and gender? In the end I want to draw my conclusions together to present a concise view of how writing about meat, vegetarianism and diet was tied to ideas of gender by women writing in *The Vote* or otherwise closely connected to the WFL suffrage campaign. Namely, why was vegetarianism so frequently said to be 'pre-eminently a woman's question'?[17]

[17] This quote is from a speech by Charlotte Despard as recorded in her obituary, which was sent to me direct by the Vegetarian Society archivist in Manchester. The obituary was published in December 1939 in the London Vegetarian Society's newspaper *The Vegetarian Messenger*, but as I am only in possession of the clipping from the archival material I do not have the full publication details. This speech was also partially quoted in Leneman (1997) p. 273, and referred to by Preece (2008), p. 174, where the publication details can be obtained, however I do not wish to present that I have had access to the newspaper as such.

Chapter 1: Vegetarian Advertising, Cafes and Restaurants in *The Vote*

1.1 Suffragettes and vegetarians: popular perceptions

Before I start analysing *The Vote* and how it portrays vegetarianism, it is important to take a moment to reflect on the cultural and social importance of food and also consider popular conceptions of both vegetarians and suffragettes.

Why are food choices important? Eating food is not only a fundamental question of staying alive, but the choices people make about food can reflect other aspects of their lives: their socio-economic situation or such aspirations, their values, gender, ethnicity, religion, age and a number of other factors. Sociologist Deborah Lupton describes the significance of food and eating as being at the very core of 'our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment.'[18] Richard Twine and historian Colin Spencer write about the vegetarian lifestyle as a political act: through alternative dietary choices one might simultaneously be seen to be questioning the status quo and the quiet assumptions that lie at the very centre of society.[19] This is illustrated by the passionate anti-vegetarian columnist of the *Daily Mirror* known as 'W.M.' in his opening lines about a Pure Food conference in Paris:

> We must eat to live; and what kinds of life we lead depend, many experts assure us, on what sorts of food we eat. In seeking to reform our food, then, the idealists in Paris are really seeking nothing less than to reform our lives.[20]

[18] Lupton (1996), p. 7
[19] Twine (2011), p. 400; Spencer (1994), p. 294.
[20] *Daily Mirror* on 16 October 1909, p. 7. 'W.M.' was in fact over the time span considered in this study the most prolific single contributor in the *Daily Mirror* on the topic of vegetarianism and food reform, and he absolutely did not condone of either campaign.

Where people are in a position to be able to make choices about food, these choices can carry enormous social, cultural and even political meaning.

Women's campaigning for suffrage had started in earnest in the late Victorian period in Britain, but it was only with the founding of the WSPU in 1903 that women began taking militant action to gain the vote, often to the shock of contemporaries: after all, such public protesting was not considered 'proper' or feminine.[21] Suffragettes were the radicals of their time. Joy Dixon has studied representations of suffragettes in the popular press, and there were a number of other associations also connected to the stereotypical suffragette: she was thought to be a spinster, sexually frustrated, frumpy, possibly hysterical and interested in animal rights as well as esoteric spirituality.[22] Vegetarians, on the other hand, were labelled 'cranks', 'food fanatics' and 'food faddists', and a number of historians describe the popular image of a late Victorian or an Edwardian vegetarian as sandal-wearing socialist.[23] A typical description of a vegetarian can be found in the *Daily Mirror*, where a man turns vegetarian as well as 'hundreds of other "ians" and "ists"' to please his new suffragette love interest.[24] The medical journal *Lancet* states that the vegetarian 'almost always has a stock of fads', and also concludes that 'we should expect […] to find among vegetarians an undue proportion of insane persons.'[25] The general tone towards vegetarians therefore appears negative, and highlights vegetarianism being but one of many associations to alternative movements. Vegetarianism is at best a harmless fad, but potentially even pathological.

The suffragette-vegetarian connection can also be seen in the *Daily Mirror*. A restaurant critic ends his review of a vegetarian establishment with '[e]vidently I

[21] Frances, (2000), p. 186.
[22] Dixon (2001), p. xi.
[23] *Daily Mirror*, see for example 4 May 1909, p. 7; 15 Jul 1914 p. 12; 4 Jun 1914, p. 5. For references to sandal-wearing socialists see: Liddington (2014), p. 14; Matheson & Graham Matheson (2020), p. 37; Stuart (2008) p. 425; Twigg (1981) Chapter II & IV and Spencer, p. 282.
[24] *Daily Mirror*, 11 January 1913, p. 7. For academic findings from a larger sample Gregory (2007), p. 10.
[25] See Mercier, Chas.'s 'Diet as a Factor in the Causation of Mental Illness' in *The Lancet* on 11 March 1916, p. 563.

am not of the stuff they make heroes or suffragettes', and a serial accounts a lady downstairs 'giving a luncheon-party to four sister suffragettes' who '[f]or a wonder were not vegetarians.'[26] Perhaps most notably *The Vote* raises vegetarianism as specifically a 'woman's question'.[27] In Figure 1 below two women can be seen eating in a sparsely furnished room with all the windows open even though there is snow piling in, wearing sandals and eating nothing but fruit. The other woman is reading the WSPU newspaper *Votes for Women,* signifying their suffragette affiliations. The print is labelled 'The Simple Life'. 'Simple life' was a loose ideology, the principles of which were adopted by the Edwardian Food Reform movement and through that also vegetarianism. Apart from a meat-free diet, food reformers also idealised healthy eating, well-ventilated houses, wooden furnishings and minimalist or even ascetic homes.[28] The Food Reform movement will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Based on this image it seems that these associations with suffragettes were popularly understood.

Fig. 1. Caricature of suffragettes.

[26] Daily Mirror, Dr Charles H Heydemann's restaurant column on 30 October 1909, p. 4 and a serial by Coralie Stanton and Heath Hosken on 25 August 1909, p. 12.
[27] *The Vote* on 16 May 1913, p. 11; Charlotte Despard's obituary, published in December 1939 in *The Vegetarian Messenger.*
[28] All these ideals can be found in Hallie Miles' 1911 book *The Ideal Home and Its Problems.*

Where there were comments from critics describing vegetarians as weak, effeminate, or part of the suffrage movement, historian Leah Leneman describes the membership of the Vegetarian Society, as reflected through their official newspaper, the *Vegetarian Messenger*, as 'a male-dominated, essentially conservative group concerned to demonstrate that their dietary choice was perfectly rational and not at all "cranky"'.[29] This goes some way to explain the way that members of the Vegetarian Society wanted to be perceived: they aimed to be seen as reasonable, 'normal' people rather than radical campaigners or some kind of alternative grouping. The 4:1 male- to female ratio of the Vegetarian Society membership can perhaps be explained with men generally partaking in societies and public life in higher numbers than women. Simultaneously, vegetarian societies appear to be very fragmented and people might have belonged to multiple societies or just one local or national one which would further thwart the figures.[30]

However, it is still surprising how little vegetarian writing and advertising there was in a general-interest paper such as the *Daily Mirror.*[31] There was no mention of vegetarianism in the classified ads in the *Daily Mirror* for the nine years studied apart from a single advert for Mapleton's nut food as an alternative for meat in 1915, whereas *The Vote* carried adverts for vegetarian maids and cooks, summer schools and cafés at least monthly, but often in every issue.[32] Therefore I believe it is noteworthy that there was significant vegetarian advertising in *The Vote*. I will now move on to consider what kinds of themes arise through the adverts placed in the newspaper.

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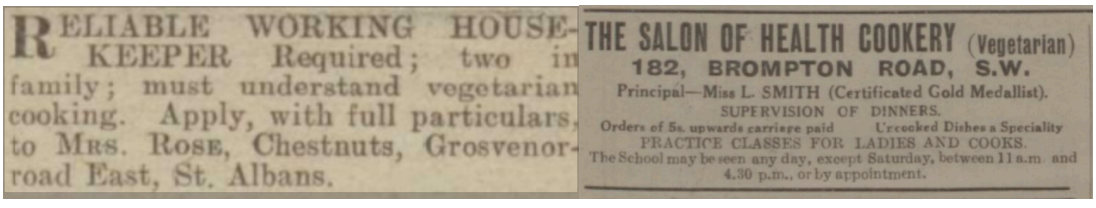
[29] Spencer (1994), p. 278; Leneman (1997), p. 281.
[30] As an example we might explore the case of Arnold Hills who was at one time the president of the London Vegetarian Society, a vice-president of the Manchester VS (see Twigg [1981], chapter 6) and also later the president of the London Vegetarian Association, seen to advertise together with the London Vegetarian Society in Figure 9. There had also been a Women's Vegetarian Union, founded by a Mrs Veigelè in 1895, but this had ceased to exist due to dwindling funds and stagnating membership figures (Gregory [2007], pp. 167-8). Mrs Veigelè featured in *The Vote* classified adverts, however, where she advertised her vegetarian guesthouse. For the purposes of this thesis it has not been possible to obtain statistical information of other vegetarian-minded societies' male-female membership ratios.
[31] Twigg (1981), Chapter IV.
[32] *Daily Mirror*, 2 June 1915, p. 9; *The Vote*, see for example: 11 May 1917, p. 8 and 25 April 1910, p. 19; 24 June 1911, p. 15; 21 January 1911, p. 15; 11 January 1918, p. 8 and 8 July 1911, p. 15.

1.2 Classified advertisements in *The Vote*

In this section I will discuss how the advertisements in *The* Vote demonstrate the prevalence of vegetarianism among its readership whilst simultaneously highlighting the gendered language they apply to cooking and vegetarianism. I will also establish that there was a connection between WFL official business ventures and vegetarianism. At the same time the advertisements draw attention to questions of class and underline the feminist connection of vegetarianism and the suffragettes through the conscious use of notable vegetarian suffragettes' names in advertising.

In the classified adverts section of *The Vote,* there are various notices searching for nannies and cooks to vegetarian households.[33] Cookery courses and vegetarian summer schools also advertise looking for new participants.[34] Advertisements for vegetarian tea houses proliferate, and we can see from other sections of the paper that these were favoured as official WFL meeting places.[35] Where food donations are requested for any functions, it is noted that vegetarian dishes should be separately marked.[36] This shows that there were clearly a number of vegetarian readers who bought *The Vote*, and that enough interest for vegetarian cookery was assumed amongst its readers to warrant paying for the advertisements. Vegetarianism was common enough amongst attendees of various WFL events to merit making mention of them specifically. Clearly, then, a number of suffragettes *were,* in fact, vegetarian.


RELIABLE WORKING HOUSE-KEEPER Required; two in family; must understand vegetarian cooking. Apply, with full particulars, to MRS. ROSE, Chestnuts, Grosvenor-road East, St. Albans.

THE SALON OF HEALTH COOKERY (Vegetarian)
182, BROMPTON ROAD, S.W.
Principal—Miss L. SMITH (Certificated Gold Medallist).
SUPERVISION OF DINNERS.
Orders of 5s. upwards carriage paid Uncooked Dishes a Speciality
PRACTICE CLASSES FOR LADIES AND COOKS.
The School may be seen any day, except Saturday, between 11 a.m. and 4.30 p.m., or by appointment.

Fig. 2: Adverts from The Vote in 1910 and 1917.

[33] See for example *The Vote* on 25 May 1917, p. 8; 2 January 1914, p. 16.
[34] See for example *The Vote* on 28 march 1913; 10 March 1916, p. 8; 20 July 1912, p. 11.
[35] See for example *The Vote* on 12 February 1912, p. 14; 14 September 1912, p. 2.
[36] The Vote 30 April 1912, pp. 6-7; 17 February 1912, p. 7.

Figure 2 presents typical advertisements, and within them it is also possible to see hints of the class structure of the readership: where the first one is looking for a housekeeper, suggesting a middle class income, the second advert invites 'ladies and cooks' to attend classes at the Salon of Health Cookery school.[37] It is important to note that both the readers and contributors of *The Vote* largely represent the middle classes and therefore the discourses on vegetarianism are presented from a middle-class perspective. Where the working classes and especially the poor might not have had the choice of whether to consume meat or not, their perspectives on this topic might also have been very dissimilar to those expressed in *The Vote* in other ways.

In a contemporary guide on household management, a well-known vegetarian campaigner and 'food reformer' Hallie Miles, wife of the famous Olympic athlete and vegetarian restaurateur Eustace Miles, suggests that in her experience cookery classes are attended by 'first the mistress, who wishes to master thoroughly the principles of food values, and of producing dainty meatless dishes; she then sends her cook too.'[38] She follows this by saying that also 'some bachelor, male students, who are tired of the attempts and failures of the ordinary cook to serve attractive, digestible dishes, and so prefer to do their own cookery' attend, suggesting there may be men who choose to venture into the traditionally feminine confines of the kitchen in order to guarantee tasty and healthy vegetarian dishes.[39] That male attendance of cookery classes warrants such a lengthy prelude hints at the irregularity of such an undertaking and confirms that cooking is still considered a firmly female pursuit.

[37] *The Vote,* 11 May 1917, p. 8; and 25 April 1910, p. 19.
[38] Miles, Hallie: *The Ideal Home and Its Problems*, Methuen & Co Ltd, London (1911), p. 65.
[39] Miles, 11, p. 65.

Fig. 3: An advertisement for Gardenia Health Food Restaurant.[40]

The regularity of appearance of the word 'dainty' in connection with vegetarian cookery caught my attention when browsing through *The Vote* (see also Fig. 3). Lupton states that 'light' and 'dainty' are words that imply femininity in connection to food, and refers to a study by Symons on the use of the word 'dainty' in 1920s Australia that concludes that it was used specifically as a signifier of feminine food as opposed to masculine.[41] It is interesting that so many of the vegetarian writers and establishments should choose to use it. It could be that the 'dainty vegetarian lunches' were marketed as such to appeal to the largely female readership of *The Vote,* but as I have not been able to locate adverts for these establishments in other publications, it is impossible to say if this is the case.[42]

The *Daily Mirror* also mentions 'dainty' dishes – albeit not vegetarian - in its 'Of Interest to Women' section.[43] In fact 'dainty' is repeatedly used in the *Daily Mirror* in adverts targeted at women, mentioning women, and decidedly not in advertising directed at men.[44] This might therefore hint at an assumption of a largely female customer base in vegetarian restaurants and tea rooms. It is possible that that the advertising for tea houses was aimed more at women because women frequented them more often than men. The connection between tea rooms and the women's suffrage campaign has certainly been made by writers such as Margaret Crawford and Jessica Sewell.[45] However, this does not explain the use of 'dainty' in connection with the many restaurants in *The Vote.* This leads me to assume that vegetarian restaurants targeting a mixed or more male clientele might have actually advertised with different terminology.

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[40] The Gardenia was specifically a vegetarian restaurant, see Crawford (2012), https://womanandhersphere.com/?s=The+Gardenia, last accessed 14 September 2020; also see *The Vote* on 23 September 1911, p. 11.

[41] Lupton (1996), pp. 96; 98.
[42] Advertised in *The Vote* on 30 June 1916, p. 7.
[43] See *Daily Mirror,* 15 February 1910, p. 10.
[44] See for example *Daily Mirror* 5 January 1909, p. 4; 15 January 1909, p. 10; 8 December 1914, p. 14.
[45] See Crawford (2012), https://womanandhersphere.com/tag/suffragettes-and-tea-rooms/ last accessed 30 September 2020; also see Sewell (2008).

I will argue in the course of this thesis that men and women wrote very differently about vegetarianism. On studying Eustace Miles' book *The Failures of Vegetarianism* – a book that despite its name promotes a vegetarian lifestyle – and Henry S. Salt's *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, the word 'dainty' is used exactly once.[46] There is also a detectable difference in tone when we look at an advertisement for The Eustace Miles Restaurant (see Fig. 5) where food is advertised for 'brain workers' and their 'proteid' supplements. I will consider 'masculine' and 'feminine' vegetarian writing in more detail in section 2.2, but for now I will note that while the use of 'dainty' may not be at the heart of the vegetarian discourses, it certainly shows a gendered side to vegetarian advertising in *The Vote.*

It is not always clear whether some of the pieces in *The Vote* are intended as adverts. In an article headed 'A Country Cousin in Town', a lady travels into London for a day to go shopping at a selection of *The Vote* advertisers exclusively. The story accounts all the shops that she visits, including the Gardenia restaurant, where, she writes, they had 'a delightful vegetarian repast'.[47] The WFL endorsed a select group of advertisers, and the restaurants section more often than not included vegetarian establishments.[48] The WFL kept a flagship shop that specialised in vegetarian products and health foods, and they stocked vegetarian cookery books that were often also reviewed and recommended in the paper.[49] This implies a level of organisational support to vegetarianism. It seems likely that this was at least in part be affected by the president of the League, Charlotte Despard, who was a known advocate of vegetarianism.[50] Leneman has named a number of other leading WFL figures who were also vegetarians, and historian Elizabeth Crawford confirms at least

[46] Eustace Miles (1902); Salt (1906), p. 45.
[47] *The Vote,* 23 September 1911, p. 11.
[48] Veg restaurants in our shopping guide, for example 7 November 1913, p. 19; 19 December 1913, p. 15.
[49] *The Vote* on 19 February 1915, p. 8; 6 March 1914; 27 December 1918, p. 8; 24 November 1916, p. 7.
[50] Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019.

one of the other founders of the WFL, Alice Schofield Coates, as vegetarian.[51] However, in the light of the other advertising mentioned above as well as *The Vote'*s other engagement with vegetarianism it seems more than likely that these restaurants and products continued to be endorsed due to continued custom from *The Vote* readers rather than simply top-led advocacy.

The names of well-known vegetarian suffragettes are used as a band of honour in advertising vegetarian establishments. Where Mrs Despard's recommendation is quoted in the notice for a boarding house, Lady Constance Lytton officially endorses Café Vegetaria in Edinburgh, her name and a quoted recommendation appearing on their advertisements in a number of issues.[52] Lady Lytton was not a member of the WFL, belonging instead to the militant WSPU, but she was a public figure through her militant activities, and *The Vote* frequently mentioned her in contexts other than adverts, too. Lytton was an outspoken vegetarian and a visible member of the suffrage movement, not least for her titled status but also for her militancy, ardent campaigning for prison reform and ceaseless advocacy of questions relating to class equality.[53] The suffragettes' imprisonments and consequent force-feeding of hunger strikers were widely reported in national newspapers. Where Lytton initially became vegetarian for health reasons, she later started seeing vegetarianism as closely connected to the oppression of women.[54] Her writing on vegetarianism in *Prisons and Prisoners* is entwined with her awakening feelings of outrage at the imbalance of power between the sexes. She describes a scene she witnessed of a sheep being taken for slaughter and the thoughts that this stirred in her. She writes:

> A vision suddenly rose in my mind of what it should have been with all its forces rightly developed, vigorous and independent… With growing fear and distress the sheep ran about more clumsily and became a source of amusement to

[51] Leneman (1997); Crawford (2003), p 387.
[52] *The Vote* 24 June 1911, p. 14; and 16 July 1910, p. 16.
[53] Harris (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37705?rskey=5c2Ww1&result=2 last accessed 15.4.2019
[54] Lytton (1014), p. 2; pp. 12-13.

> the onlookers, who laughed and jeered at it... At last it was caught by its two gaolers, and as they carried it away one of them, resenting its struggles, gave it a great cuff in the face… on seeing this sheep it seemed to reveal to me for the first time the position of women throughout the world. I realized how often women are held in contempt as beings outside the pale of human dignity, excluded and confined, laughed at and insulted because of conditions for which they are not responsible, but which are due to fundamental injustices with regard to them, and to the mistakes of a civilization in the shaping of which they had no free share.[55]

In this quote Lytton clearly likens the oppression of non-human animals to the subjugation of women in society. It also ties in with her experiences in prison and the excessively violent treatment many suffragettes received there. The most striking aspect of this quote is the similarity that Lytton's arguments carry to those of Adams as expressed in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, most importantly that the oppressions of women and animals are analogous, and that the existence of one supports the sustenance of the other. Adams argues that by continuing to eat and kill animals the patriarchal culture of domination, where both women and animals are being oppressed, is constantly being reinforced, enabling continuing violence and perceived ownership of women's and animals' bodies.[56] Also Leneman notes the 'explicit link… between feminism and vegetarianism' in Lytton's book.[57] Leneman, Richardson and Lansbury have written about women recognising in the situation of animals a reflection of their own position as victims of male violence.[58]

I believe that there is a class aspect in vegetarianism, too. To her horror, Lytton was force-fed a meat-based broth during her hunger strike in prison, an

[55] Lytton (1914), pp. 12-3
[56] Adams (1990).
[57] Leneman (1997), p. 274.
[58] Leneman (1997), pp. 271, 274; Richardson, (2018), https://beinghumanfestival.org/feminists-eat-your-greens/ last accessed 29 September 2020; and Lansbury (1985), pp. 414-5, 426.

eventuality that greatly traumatised her.[59] This happened when she was posing as a working-class woman to expose the inequality in treatment of prisoners based on their class status, as she believed she had received favourable treatment due to being an aristocrat during her earlier imprisonment that had led to her early release.[60] Vegetarianism is clearly connected to some suffragettes' feminist views as Lytton's example shows.

However, for many suffragism was not merely a question of sex equality, but they also concentrated on trying to obtain greater equality between the classes. This was also connected to questions of food, which can be seen with both Lytton and Despard. Both were wealthy women who from their own volition chose to either live amongst the poor, or in Lytton's case, perform duties considered unsuitable for their status, such as cleaning and other manual labour, as well as eventually *becoming* one of the working class poor, even if for only a short while.[61] Some historians have referred to the prison experiences and hunger striking of Despard and Lytton as almost religious glorification of suffering or, in the case of Lytton, even willingness to become martyrs for their cause.[62] The suffering they went through in prison was also reflected in relationship to food: they were willing to endure pain and hardship for their principles, and their vegetarianism was still at the forefront of their commitments even in prison. Despard wrote about women's suffragettes' prison experiences that 'every woman who suffered in the cause in those early militant days held her suffering as a sacrament, which hallowed and purified her.'[63] Although not historically comparable, this connection is thematically reminiscent of Bynum's theory of food as a means of agency and control and the importance of fasting in women's religiosity in the medieval context.[64]

The violence against animals was not necessarily even as much about gender as it was about power and the way the powerless were abused and violated with

[59] Lytton (1914, p. 277.
[60] Lytton (1914), p. 235
[61] Twigg (1981), Chapter IV; Mulvey-Roberts (1999), p. 162-3. Lytton (1914), pp. 99-100.
[62] Mulvey-Roberts (1999), p. 160, 171; Dixon (2991), p. 188.
[63] Despard (1913), p. 15.
[64] Bynum (1987).

alarming regularity. For many suffragettes, women and the poor were much in the same situation, with poor women the most disadvantaged. *The Vote,* apart from empathising with the women being forcibly fed, did also not forget the vegetarian prisoners, and sent deputations to demand increased rations of food and greater personal allowances for the imprisoned vegetarians.[65]

Vegetarianism became part of the suffrage story through the joining together of these names and these causes, in casual references, in advertisements as well as through definitively feminist writing and official involvement of the WFL with the vegetarian cause. I will now move on to consider in more detail the vegetarian tea shop and restaurant culture the suffrage organisations' meetings circled around, as well as the question of why vegetarianism was considered to be important specifically to women.

1.3 Tea Shops, Restaurants and the Women's Freedom League

In this section I will establish that specifically vegetarian tea shops and restaurants held a place of importance in WFL activities, both as meeting places as well as official business ventures. I will demonstrate that there was a connection between vegetarianism and ideas about national fitness, the future of the British Empire and moral character. I will argue that through its persistent visibility in official WFL ventures, vegetarianism arises as a point of significant importance to at least a notable portion of WFL's executive branch, and that the promotion of vegetarianism in WFL establishments was a form of grassroots activism to encourage the wider adaptation of the diet.

There are numerous references to tea shops as the preferred meeting places of both British and American suffrage organisations.[66] What can be ascertained from *The Vote* is that a number of these were specifically vegetarian establishments: Alan's Tea Rooms, The Tea Cup Inn, The Gardenia, The Vegetaria and The Minerva were regularly advertised in the newspaper, and they were also

[65] The Vote on 6 June 1912, p. 13.
[66] See Crawford (2012), https://womanandhersphere.com/tag/suffragettes-and-tea-rooms/ last accessed 30 September 2020; Sewell (2008).

confirmed as venues for branch meetings and various talks within the pages of *The Vote.*[67] Historian Colin Spencer explains that vegetarian restaurants gained popularity amongst women during Victorian times as respectable places for ladies to visit without men.[68] Whilst this was evidently the case also after the turn of the century, there now seemed to also be sympathetic political involvement from some of the owners. The fact that management welcomed suffragette meetings and advertised in *The Vote* speaks of a level of acceptance, but also possibly business needs; whereas sometimes there was straightforward complicity in the advancement of the 'cause'. In 1911 the suffragettes' plan to boycott the census came to a head when a large group of suffragettes hid inside The Gardenia all night to avoid participating in the collection of details.[69] Only a few years later vegetarian tea shops and restaurants became a perhaps surprising branch of WFL activity when between 1914 and 1916 the League opened a number of eateries: The Minerva Café, the WFL Settlement in Nine Elms and the Despard Arms public house.[70]

Historian Elsa Richardson states that the Minerva functioned as a headquarters as well as a revenue-building enterprise for the WFL. Apart from this it seems to have operated as fairly typical tea shop.[71] The Nine Elms Settlement supplied a type of social work to local poverty-stricken women and children through cheap vegetarian meals and a 'children's Guest House and Milk Depot for nursing mothers' (see Fig. 4).[72] The Despard Arms was a temperance pub, 'the fulfilment of a long cherished dream – a Public House that shall be a House for the public, without stigma or degradation.'[73] The dreamer in question was Charlotte Despard, and the Despard Arms was the answer to create a venue where 'good food, at reasonable cost, comfortable accommodation and enjoyable recreation'

[67] See for example *The Vote* 16 September 1911, p. 4; 7 September 1917, p. 2.
[68] Spencer (1994), p. 275.
[69] Matheson (2020), p. 43; also see Crawford (2012), https://womanandhersphere.com/?s=The+Gardenia, last accessed 14 September 2020.
[70] *The Vote* on 9 June 1916, p. 7; 21 April 1916 pp. 2-3.
[71] See Richardson (2018), https://beinghumanfestival.org/feminists-eat-your-greens/ last accessed 29 September 2020.
[72] *The Vote* 8 December 1916, p. 3.
[73] *The Vote,* 2 April 1915, p. 2.

could be found without the presence of alcohol.[74] The fact that both places were vegetarian is not a coincidence.

Women's Freedom League Settlement

"THE CHILDREN'S CORNER"

93, NINE ELMS LANE, LONDON, S.W.

President: Mrs. DESPARD.
Hon. Treasurer: Mrs. DELBANCO.
Hon. Superintendent of Guest House and Restaurant: Miss A. M. COLE.
Hon. Secretary and Organiser: Miss KATHLEEN HOLMES.

CHILDREN'S
Vegetarian Restaurant

150-250 Penny Dinners are served daily at this restaurant, consisting of a bowl of Thick Soup and a substantial slice of Pudding.

Milk Depot

Pure Milk supplied to Nursing Mothers and Delicate Babies at twopence a pint. Milk Puddings daily for young children.

Children's Guest House

Children are received as guests for the entire period of their mother's confinement and convalescence; also in cases where the mother seeks a temporary home for the children during her absence in hospital for operation.

Visitors will be welcome at any time, and assistance, either in Money, Groceries, Fruit and Vegetables, Clothing, or offers of personal service, will be gratefully received at the above address.

Minerva Publishing Co., Ltd., 144, High Holborn, W.C.

Fig. 4: A leaflet advertising the WFL Settlement in Nine Elms

Concern for the poor and the hardships experienced especially by women and children were prominent subjects in *The Vote,* and food was seen to be a central building block of a healthy nation and the future of the Empire.[75] Hallie Miles states that 'it is upon the cooks that the future of the nation depends' and this belief is clearly reflected in the pages of *The Vote.*[76] In the nineteenth century Booth and Rowntree conducted their study on the London poor, among other things drawing attention to questions of malnourishment among the destitute. More recently the poor physical health of Boer War recruits had raised alarm over dietary issues in Britain, and after the outbreak of the First World War questions of nourishment were again on the forefront, relating to concerns over

[74] Nine Elms milk scheme and vegetarian food in *The Vote*, 2 April 1915, pp. 11-12; the Children's guesthouse *The Vote,* 12 March 1915, p. 3.
[75] *The Vote* on 17 December 1915, p. 3; 20 February 1914, p. 7.
[76] Miles (1911), pp. 64-5.

national fitness on the one hand and pressures created by food shortages and, towards the end of the war, rationing on the other.

The Nine Elms settlement was an attempt to create a place for women and children where they could buy cheap, nourishing vegetarian meals and mothers and children could be looked after through the milk scheme, play room and the children's guesthouse which was designed to assist women recovering from birth who could not afford to get paid help to look after their other children.[77] Later on there were also vegetarian cooking lessons offered at the Settlement.[78] The role of mothers had previously been highlighted in vegetarian circles: they were, after all, in charge of feeding and raising the next generation.[79] Deborah Lupton points out that it was in fact common for pregnant and nursing mothers to be advised against consuming substantial amounts of meat even in non-vegetarian advice books as meat was thought to be linked to feelings of aggression.[80] An article in *The Vote* dealing with the malnourishment of women emphatically concludes 'And the baby at her breast? Let empire-builders look to it: for of such mothers comes the race that is to be.'[81] The food women and children eat was considered important for the future of not just the nation, but the British Empire, and the solution offered by the WFL was to feed the next generation specifically vegetarian food.

Temperance, on the other hand, had gone hand in hand with vegetarian thought for centuries, and at the same time held a place as an established cause endorsed by campaigners for women's suffrage since the previous century.[82] Twigg notes that vegetarian restaurants were generally teetotal.[83] There were some adverts for treatment for alcohol or drug dependency in *The Vote*, and these specifically mention that a vegetarian diet will be followed during participation.[84] Historians of vegetarian thought have frequently noted the perceived connection between

[77] *The Vote* on 4 September 1914, p. 4; 1 September 1916, p. 8.
[78] *The Vote,* 10 March 1916, p. 8.
[79] Gregory (2007), p. 163.
[80] Lupton (1997), p. 98.
[81] *The Vote* on 30 January 1914, pp. 11-12.
[82] Gregory (2007), p. 166; Vornanen (2014), pp. 30-1;.
[83] Twigg (1981), Chapter II.
[84] See for example *The Vote* on 6 January 1912, p. 15.

meat, moral character and sexual and other excesses.[85] The lust for alcohol was one such excess seen to be awakened by meat consumption.[86] The violence of the meat industry was seen by many to reflect on those who consumed the flesh, and meat was thought to be an 'excitant' that contributed to violent behaviour, drinking in excess and sexual recklessness. Many vegetarians believed that these vices could be abolished with the adoption of a vegetarian diet. *The Vote* writes that 'Vegetarianism [is] intimately connected with social reform, vegetarian people would be more humane than flesh-eating people, suffering less from indigestion, their temper would improve, and the curse of drink would in time disappear.'[87]

Women's movements, on the other hand, link with temperance due to the effects that drinking in excess had on women. Women would often be the ones to bear the brunt of their drunken husbands' violent rages. Additionally, in a society where men were expected to support their spouses, women frequently did not work, or alternatively were paid much lower wages as they were not considered to be the actual breadwinners of the family, making them totally dependent on their husband's wages. If those wages were spent down the pub, it could mean no food for the women and children, and sadly the pages of *The Vote* are filled with accounts of women and children left to starve by their husbands.[88] As meat was seen to increase the lust for alcoholic beverages, the vegetarian meals offered were part of the pub's temperance work and vision of a teetotal, more wholesome future. The Despard Arms was more than a food an entertainment venue: I argue that it was part of the WLF's project to change society from the bottom up *in addition to* their larger-scale activism, and vegetarianism was a small but crucial part of this quest.

A preference for vegetarian venues as suffragette meeting places is clear in *The Vote*, and through its own restaurants The Minerva, the WFL Nine Elms Settlement and the Despard Arms the WFL consistently promoted vegetarianism.

[85] See for example Kean (1998), pp. 122, 125; Bynum (1987); Stuart (2006), p. 379.
[86] Vornanen (2014), p. 35, see also *The Vote,* 16 May 1913, p. 11.
[87] *The Vote,* 16 May 1913, p. 11.
[88] See for example *The Vote* 17 December 1910, p. 3; 10 December 1910, p. 3.

In a leaflet about the WFL Settlement it is stated that ' [i]n deference to the principles of the inaugurators, the whole of the food provided is strictly vegetarian, nut butter replacing lard, etc., and nut suet being used for a very popular "plum duff" and "suet treacle" puddings, which are served regularly every week, whatever other dishes may be omitted.'[89] Vegetarianism at the Settlement was clearly a matter of principle. I would therefore argue that even though vegetarianism was by no means expected from members, nor is there any indication that even the majority of WFL membership might have followed a vegetarian diet, the consistent presence of it in WFL official ventures proves that a significant enough number of its executive body viewed vegetarianism as one of the League's central values. I will now move on from looking at general advertising to exploring the vegetarian lectures, talks and demonstrations as reported by *The Vote.*

[89] WFL Settlement leaflet, Gale primary source collections: Manuscript Number S. AND P. 9/8 , Microfilm Reel # 83.

Chapter 2: Food Reform as reported by *The Vote*

2.1 Food Reform for Women

In this section I will concentrate on establishing why WFL lecturers and writers on food reform believed that vegetarianism was important specifically to women. I argue that questions of food were undeniably seen as women's area of duty and expertise during this period, and that the writers on vegetarianism in *The Vote* encouraged a view where feelings of both responsibility and empowerment were highlighted, underlining the unique opportunities of individual women to exercise the power they possessed over decisions of food and make choices that were both good for their health and ethically sound.

A number of lectures were held on vegetarianism at WFL formal functions, and the majority of them concentrated on its perceived health benefits alongside ethical concerns. In *The Vote* 'food reform' appears to be synonymous with 'vegetarian', even if elsewhere the Food Reform movement was noted to include also meat-eating followers, the emphasis being on the healthiness of diet.[90] Interestingly the lectures offered by the WFL on food reform were usually provided by men, sometimes followed by female speakers in a supporting role, whereas talks and demonstrations at local branch meetings were mostly given by women. Lectures were held on topics such as 'The Value of Health Foods', 'The Ethics of Food Reform', 'The Practical Use of Health Foods' or simply 'Health Foods'. [91] All of these comprised discussions on vegetarianism. Rather than a host of different speakers, it seems that there were a handful of people active in various localities who often came back to lecture on a number of occasions. What is noteworthy about these lectures is that some clearly attempt to connect

[90] This is visible in the *Daily Mirror* where the focus of the discussion around food reform centres around the use of whole grains, with hardly a mention of vegetarianism. Also Gregory (2007), p. 2.
[91] *The Vote* on 5 February 1915, p. 8, 4 February 1911, p. 10, and 25 April 1913 p. 3.

vegetarianism to the women's movement. I will now explore the connections made between food reform and women in more detail.

At its most basic, food reformers believed in following a healthy lifestyle that, alongside nutrition, comprised things such as exercise, airy and sparse interiors in houses and thriftiness.[92] It was also common for vegetarians and food reformers to believe the consumption of meat contributed to illnesses, a view held by Constance Lytton, Hallie Miles and Charlotte Despard.[93] Historians Leah Leneman, Hilda Kean, James Gregory and Rod Preece have noted an occasional trend in Victorian and Edwardian literature on vegetarianism where it is said to be specifically a woman's cause, and Charlotte Despard's much-referenced speech illustrates the topmost reason generally given for this.[94] She says that:

> Vegetarianism is pre-eminently a woman's question. It is horrible to think that women should have to handle and cook dead flesh. The loathsome operations in the kitchen, the disgusting sights at butcher's shops, the brutalities of the slaughter-house, and the transit of cattle, are simply dreadful. If people themselves had to kill the animals, there would be no meat-eaters.[95]

Vegetarianism was a concern specifically for women because food and cooking evidently were women's work: *they* are the ones who must prepare the meat. In *The Vote* Captain Carey is recorded as saying in a lecture that food reform is 'a woman's question, for women [are] the biggest buyers of the food of the nation.'[96] Women are presented as dishonoured or corrupted when participating in meat-based cookery, and, because on their shoulders lays the responsibility

[92] Miles (1911). This book is written specifically from the perspective of a food reformer.
[93] Stuart (2006), p. 376; Leneman (1997), p. 275; Matheson-Pollock (2020), pp. 37, 40; Allen (2004), https://www-oxforddnb-com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-50457?rskey=B25Q25&result=1 last accessed 24.9.2020.

[94] Leneman (1997), Kean (1998), p. 122; p. 273; Gregory (2007), p. 1, 163, 167; Preece (2008), p. 174.
[95] Charlotte Despard's obituary, published in December 1939 in *The Vegetarian Messenger.*
[96] *The Vote* on 16 May 1913, p. 11.

for also buying the flesh, they are doubly complicit in the slaughtering of animals. Where women were rarely butchers themselves, they could not claim innocence of the procedures required to bring meat to the family table. Annie Besant, a prominent suffragist, president of the Theosophical Society and an outspoken vegetarian, states that:

> In order that she may eat meat, in order that she may gratify her appetite; and she puts on another the coarsening and the brutalising which she escapes from herself in her refinement, while she takes for the gratification of her own appetite the fruits of the brutalisation of her fellow men. Now, I venture to submit that if people want to eat meat, they should kill the animals for themselves, that they have no right to degrade other people by work of that sort. [97]

Therefore the message among feminist vegetarians seems to be twofold: on the one hand women are complicit in oppressive, unacceptable behaviour towards animals when they eat and prepare meat, but on the other, through vegetarianism they can be empowered to change not only their state of health, but society and even women's position on a deeper level. As Leneman has noted, this raises the women reduced to a domestic existence to a new sphere of influence.[98]

These discourses highlight the power already in women's hands and invite them to take charge of it. They also highlight the power of the individual. Lucy Delap points out the 'introspective and individualistic' tones assumed by many feminist writers around the turn of the century, whereas historian Tristram Stuart discusses the belief in the power possessed by individuals in the vegetarian movement, particularly through the example of Shelley and Gandhi.[99] I argue that the approach highlighting an individualistic, grass-roots approach to vegetarianism is of significant importance to the vegetarian contributors of *The*

[97] Besant (1913), pp. 17-18
[98] Leneman (1997), p. 271.
[99] Delap (2004), p. 116-7; Stuart (2006), p. 428.

Vote, and that it is exactly this holistic approach combining responsibility and empowerment that dominates the feminist-vegetarian food reformers' central message to their readers. These women are saying that those who have power should use it wisely, and the reference here is clear: after all, the women's movement is driven by experiences from the losing side of the power balance.

2.2 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' in Discourses of Food Reform

I will now move on to consider the gendered nuances of the language employed in connection to food reform. I argue that women writers utilised a specifically feminine vocabulary when writing about vegetarianism, and that this links in with a broader feminist objective of re-evaluating societal value systems. Additionally, I will explore women's writing on vegetarianism and compare it to texts authored by men and demonstrate that there are some perceptible differences that seem to be connected to gender.

Among the best-known celebrity campaigners for food reform in Edwardian Britain, alongside names such as George Bernard Shaw, Henry Salt, Charlotte Despard and Lady Constance Lytton, were Eustace and Hallie Miles. Although not confirmed members of the WFL, they were clearly sympathetic to their cause: there are numerous entries in *The Vote* thanking the Miles for their assistance at various functions, and Hallie Miles also contributed opinion pieces to the newspaper.[100] The Eustace Miles Restaurant was a regular meeting place of the WSPU and it also regularly advertised in *The Vote* offering discounts to its readers and hosted a number of WFL events.[101] Hallie Miles' book *The Ideal Home and Its Problems* is therefore an excellent source to gain more understanding of how a female influencer with feminist connections in the food reform movement wrote about vegetarianism and how the language she uses reflects on her ideas of gender and its connection to food. I will now look at Miles' writing in some more detail.

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[100] See for example *The Vote* 20 July 1912, p. 11 regarding the Miles' help; 5 December 1915, p. 16 and 11 July 1911, p. 5 for writing by Hallie Miles.
[101] Matheson-Pollock (2020), p. 42-3, also see *The Vote* on 27 November 1914 p. 3; and 19 March 1910 p. 9.

Much of the vocabulary Miles employs has gendered connotations. She states it as her aim to 'make the purer diets more attractive to the great public'.[102] Twigg has noted a connection in both feminist and vegetarian writing of this time period with ideas of purity.[103] Purity can be seen as a gendered word in this context: sexual purity was expected of women, and purity in diet was desirable for them, too. Meat is connected to carnality, to 'sins of the flesh'.[104] Vegetarian food, therefore, is free of the tainting carnality of meat. I have referred previously to the belief that meat was connected to lust and sexual excesses, whereas purity of course indicates the opposite of sexual promiscuity.

Miles also believes in the almost literally transformational qualities of vegetarian food and sees it as 'visibly increasing the refinement of the one who is cooking these dainty dishes.'[105] Not only does vegetarian food lead to refinement, but 'non-flesh cookery also calls for more refinement and intelligence' and offers 'opportunities for refined tasteful work in the kitchen'.[106] Refinement is a word with feminine connotations, which is also visible in Besant's use of feminine refinement as a way to ridicule those hiding behind it in the quote in section 2.1.[107] Miles believes that women excel in the 'preparation of sweet dishes and cakes because in them there is nothing to jar with their finer instincts.'[108] Many of the historians of vegetarianism discuss contemporary Victorian and Edwardian ideas of femininity. Kindness, gentleness, harmoniousness, intuition, sentimentality, refined feelings and concern for animals were conventionally assigned to women.[109] Associating vegetarianism to these typically feminine attributes is undoubtedly visible in Miles's book.

[102] Miles (1911), pp. 63-4.
[103] Twigg (1981), Chapter IV.
[104] Twigg (1979), p. 17; Kean (1997), p. 125
[105] Miles (1911), pp. 63-4
[106] Miles (1911), pp. 62-3.
[107] Besant (1913, pp. 17-18.
[108] Miles (1911), p. 62.
[109] Gregory (2007), p. 163, 173; Donovan (1990), pp. 352, 358-9, Twigg (1981), Chapter IV.

At the same time Miles sees vegetarian cooking as a way out of the home for 'women of position and education.'[110] She reflects on her own experience as a food educator and part of the management at the Eustace Miles Restaurant and concludes that 'woman need no longer be shut out from the busy centres of life and industry, or cut out from the opportunities for developing [a] strong and self-reliant personality'[111] Miles subscribes to the same kind of optimism as described above in *The Vote*: she believes that promoting vegetarianism can be a first step in changing society and getting women employed outside of the house, empowering and literally transforming individuals as well as gradually the society at large. She expresses similar views to the ones in *The Vote* about meat-based cookery being demeaning to women: by adapting a vegetarian lifestyle they would 'no longer [be] shut out from the kitchen by the unpleasantness which was necessarily associated with the handling or raw flesh'.[112] This highlights the question of class, because where Miles and her middle class sisters may have had the choice to refuse kitchen duties and leave them to the servants, this was certainly not the case for working class women who had to cook for their families. Miles does, however, highlight the importance of also educating one's servants on the virtues and importance of vegetarianism.[113]

This gendered language links to a broader phenomenon of reassessing and re-evaluating feminine attributes amongst first-wave feminists, which has been observed by Donovan, Twigg and Dixon.[114] Where modern day feminists may not consider embracing many of these traditionally 'feminine' attributes as feminist, I believe that the employment of these in the context of vegetarianism was in fact linked to an attempt at envisaging a future where feminine qualities stood on par with the traditional masculine ideals of reason, knowledge and strength. Elevating femininity was an equalising act, symbolically raising womanly attributes and the women attached to them to place of importance, and this

[110] Miles (1911), p. 64
[111] Miles (1911), p. viii; 59; 128.
[112] Miles (1911), pp. 62-63.
[113] Miles (1913), pp. 59-61; 64-65; 101-2.
[114] Donovan (1990), pp. 358-9;

practice of redefining societal value systems to favour the feminine is reflected in the vegetarian-feminist writing of the era.

If women's writing on vegetarianism employed a feminine vocabulary and alluded to women's empowerment, how did male writers approach vegetarianism? With a limited sample of two male-authored books on vegetarianism by Henry S. Salt and Eustace Miles as well as a number of articles and readers' letters in the *Daily Mirror,* it is possible to say that there were some detectable differences. While in the context of *The Vote*, a women's suffrage publication, we see male lecturers connect vegetarianism to the women's movement, the other literature studied seems to instead be distancing itself from ideas of femininity and instead concentrates on rationality, ethics and health-based arguments, meanwhile devoting significant amounts of time to convincing the reader that a vegetarian diet will not lead to weakness. Spencer refers to the persistent belief that in order to build muscle one needs to eat meat, and this certainly seems to be the accepted understanding of the British general public at the turn of the century.[115]

Eustace Miles as a male athlete was frequently held up as proof that vegetarian men *could* be strong.[116] In response to an article describing the clientele of a vegetarian restaurant in unfavourable terms, a reader of the *Daily Mirror* writes: 'Mr Eustace Miles is, I understand, a vegetarian… Is Eustace Miles a pale weakling with glasses?'[117] It seems that vegetarian men repeatedly find themselves in a position where they are forced to defend their own masculinities against accusations of effeminacy. In a modern context Nath describes men who refuse to eat meat as provocative in their rejection of hegemonic masculinity.[118] Based on the primary material studied for this thesis it appears that a very similar sentiment was aroused by vegetarian men in the early years of the twentieth century.

[115] Spencer (1994), p. 278.
[116] *Daily Mirror* on 1 November 1909, p. 9; Eustace Miles (1902), pp. 56-7, 107-110.
[117] *Daily Mirror* on 1 November 1909.
[118] Nath (2011), p. 270.

Whilst neither Salt nor Eustace Miles promote an overtly masculine image of the vegetarian, the language they employ differs notably from the women's writing: there are no references to finer instincts, refinement or dainty meals. This emphasis can also be seen in the advert for The Eustace Miles Restaurant (Fig. 5), which highlights the availability of 'proteid food' for 'brain workers' in bold letters instead of the dainty lunches of the female-owned businesses.[119]

Arguments in the men's writing rarely appeal to the readers' emotions, but instead rational arguments and moral obligations are quoted as the chief reasons for why one should follow a vegetarian diet. Rationality is a feature traditionally attributed to men.[120] While Despard, Besant, Lytton and Hallie Miles visibly empathise with the suffering of the animals, Salt and Eustace Miles reason with the reader. Josephine Donovan has written about the division in the late-Victorian animal-rights campaigning between sentimentalism and rationalism and how this can be seen to split roughly along the gender lines, with men appealing to reason and women to emotions in their defence of vegetarianism.[121] Women's emotional involvement can also be seen in the anti-vivisection movement, which primarily engaged woman activists and very much appealed to a feeling of empathy.[122]

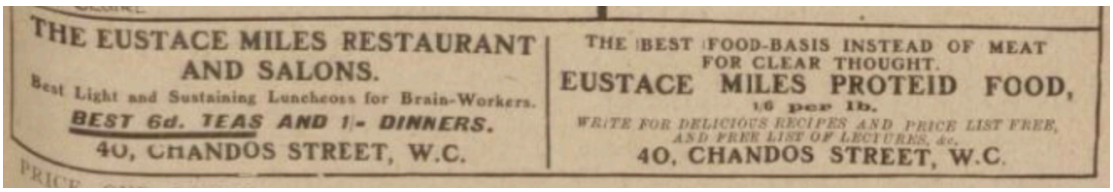

Fig. 5: An advertisement for The Eustace Miles Restaurant in The Vote in 1910.

So can it be said, then, that meat was in fact thought of as a masculine food? I believe so, and will now discuss this in more detail in the context of the First

[119] *The Vote* on 16 July 1910, p. 16, further information of proprietors of tea rooms in Crawford (2012), https://womanandhersphere.com/tag/suffragettes-and-tea-rooms/ last accessed 30 September 2020.
[120] Donovan (1990), pp. 360-2.
[121] Donovan (1990), p. 352.
[122] Lansbury (1985), p. 474; Leneman (1997), Donovan (1997), p. 367.

World War, which really brought vegetarianism to the thoughts of the greater public as meat became scarce and eventually rationing was introduced.

Chapter 3: War, Class and Local Activity

3.1 World War I, Meat and Vegetarianism in *The Vote*

While the women's suffrage organisations had agreed to cease their campaigning for the vote for the duration of the war, the WFL still actively discussed gender inequalities in *The Vote* and continued to demand for more opportunities for women to participate in society. When the war broke out, the WFL adopted a pacifist stance towards the conflict.[123] As a matter of principle even before the war the WFL, unlike the WSPU, had not employed violent techniques or protested in a way that could injure people despite its militancy. The WFL was militant through civil disobedience rather than bombs or fires.[124] It could indeed be that it was due to the WFL's anti-violence stance that many vegetarians with feminist leanings were initially attracted to it, because, as Gregory points out, it is common among vegetarians to object to violence and support pacifism.[125]

This section concentrates specifically on the gendered notion of meat as masculine, a theme that became highlighted after the outbreak of the war. I will argue that writers in *The Vote* both noted the cultural connection of meat and masculinity, and simultaneously rejected it. In addition, I will argue that patriotism was seen in distinctly different terms for men and women, and that meat, or its absence, played an important part in this perception.

During the war years *The Vote* was flooded with articles about food. The greatest anger was felt over the decision to repeatedly overlook women as food controllers, despite their undeniable knowledge in the field.[126] The WFL supplied lectures on 'Food in War Time' and vegetarian cookery demonstrations

[123] Eustance (1993), p. 259.
[124] Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019.

[125] Gregory (2007), p. 1.
[126] *The Vote* on 23 November 1917; 22 December 1916, p. 6; 10 November 1916, p. 1.

specifically to suit the times.[127] The government-led 'Eat Less Meat'-campaign also advertised in the paper, but I will not concentrate on it specifically as its aim was not ideological vegetarianism but rather it was a response to the temporary meat scarcity. It is perhaps ironic that war, the ultimate symbol of masculine bravery, strength and power, was also the cause of meat, John Bull's food of choice, slowly disappearing from British plates. Meat is strongly tied to discourses of both gender and gendered nationalism. To demonstrate this cultural linkage it is to the non-vegetarian writing where we must look now, because that is where contemporary gendered associations and presumptions about meat really become evident.

There are many references in *The Vote* to meat as a masculine food, but this does not mean the writers necessarily supported vegetarianism. In fact, *The Vote* regularly contested the assumption that men might need meat in their diets more than women. A 1915 article by Nina Boyle quotes the Prime Minister, who states that it is due to the 'absence of meat-eating men' that meat prices are on the rise. The outraged Boyle goes on to lament that '[t]hose who patronised the prime joints and best cuts, he said, were mainly away, and those who "were contented" with lesser portions – the "scrags" he believed they were called – remained.'[128] While it was often stated that women did *enjoy* meat, the newspaper demonstrates repeatedly that when meat was scarce, it was the men who were treated as being entitled to it.[129] In a separate article from the same year the writer mockingly summarises the government's approach to food policy, stating that '[i]f sufficient women do without meat, and men without tobacco, and children without sweets, great savings can be effected.'[130] The author does not agree with the assessment of meat as an 'extra' for women to surrender when men and children are giving up luxuries, and this is revealing of contemporary cultural associations of meat in relation to gender. A reader called Dorothy Evans objected to men being given larger portions of meat than women in rationing. She proposed a system of using a person's size and the amount of

[127] *The Vote* on 10 December 1915, p. 10; 29 June 1917, p. 7.
[128] *The Vote,* 12 March 1915, p. 2.
[129] See for example *The Vote* on 12 March 1915; 11 August 1911, p. 3.
[130] *The Vote* 30 July 1915, pp. 4-5.

physical labour they undertake as a measurement instead whilst scrapping gender as a parameter altogether, stating the '[t]here is no defence of sex differentiation in rationing.'.[131]

Where women were expected to give up their claim to meat during times of national need, men's voluntary vegetarianism was not always looked upon so kindly. Gregory discusses the association of beef to Englishness and masculinity: the British bulldog was supposed to consume a diet rich in meat.[132] I have previously referred to Adams' theory of the masculine connotations of meat, but the view of meat's cultural positioning as men's food is also expressed in various historical and contemporary contexts by a number of academics. These include Caroline Walker Bynum relating to the medieval period, and in a modern setting Deborah Lupton; as well as Carrie Hamilton, Josephine Donovan, Jemál Nath and Richard Twine in a particularly feminist context.[133] On the other hand, historian Rod Preece points out that vegetarianism has been associated with a lack of patriotic feeling.[134] The *Daily Express* confirms this sentiment already before the war in an article about the Eton headmaster who 'was known to have leanings towards vegetarianism and that was un-English.'[135]

Where the wartime 'Eat Less Meat' campaign was aimed towards those on the home front, the men fighting in Europe were still expected to receive meat to eat where possible.[136] Meat was also linked to physical strength as can be seen in an editorial of *The Lancet* discussing the physical effects of vegetarianism: 'Anyone, we are told, who has seen the ordinary Bengali coolie at work will not require much statistical evidence to convince him of the marked superiority of the European; men have often to be employed in India for work that women will do in England.'[137] Apart from the glaringly racist and othering practices employed

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[131] *The Vote* on 12 April 1918, p. 6.
[132] Gregory (2007), p. 13.
[133] Bynum (1987); Lupton (1996); Hamilton (2016); Donovan (1997); and Twine (2011).
[134] Preece (2008), p. 270.
[135] *Daily Mirror* on 4 June 1914, p. 5.
[136] Imperial War Museum 'The Food That Fuelled the Front' https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-food-that-fuelled-the-front, last accessed 25 October 2020. Also see Haythornthwaite (1992), pp. 380-81.
[137] *The Lancet* editorial 'Vegetarianism and Physique', 21 November 1908, p.1537;

here towards Indian natives, partial culpability for their perceived weakness and effeminacy is also laid on the inferiority of their vegetable-based diet. The implication is clear: meat makes a man, and even a 'second-rate' man could be a little stronger and manlier if they consumed it.

In *The Vote*'s wartime writing, the culturally dominant idea of meat as necessarily masculine is challenged. Contributors insist that women must also be entitled to meat and sufficient, decent nourishment, and that women should not be forced to be vegetarians should they not choose to become such themselves. In *The Vote* meat is not a luxury for women, but a staple to which people regardless of gender should have equal claim. The aspect of choice in vegetarianism is highlighted, but whilst gendered assumptions about meat are being discussed and contested the vegetarian writing in *The Vote* continues. The WFL engaged with their vegetarian readership during the war through lectures, cookery lessons as well as by sending deputations to the government demanding extra rations to those that forego meat.[138] Additionally, as seen in the previous chapter, the WFL takes a stand in starting a number of vegetarian restaurants and tea houses over the war years.

Where some historians detect a rise in the interest in animal welfare and vegetarianism during the war years and immediately following them, this was not particularly highlighted in *The Vote*.[139] Instead, vegetarianism remained a consistent undercurrent in the newspaper. The WFL's official vegetarian activity increased over the war years through their restaurant ventures, but apart from the WFL Settlement these were not really connected to the ongoing war.

3.2 'Gastronomic Inequality': Women, Meat and Class

It was not at all unusual for discourses on vegetarianism to be connected to debates on class in the Victorian and Edwardian periods in Britain. In this section I will argue that writers in *The Vote* highlighted the effects of gender on

[138] *The Vote* on 6 July 1912, p. 13.
[139] See Kean (1998), p. 109; Adams (1990), p. 110.

questions of nutrition amongst the poor. These writers rejected the assumption that men should have more claim to meat than women in times of scarcity. While vegetarianism was acknowledged as a potential solution to improve the diets of the poor, I argue that the writers in *The Vote* highlighted the importance vegetarianism being a voluntary choice above any perceived practicality of pressing the poor to eat more 'healthily' food without the meat.

The writers of *The Vote* took a great interest in the conditions of the poor and working classes and engaged in much philanthropic work to try and improve their living conditions. Interest in philanthropy was of course one of the socially acceptable or even encouraged occupations for middle class women of this period, but it could be that interest in elevating the lower-earning classes was also generated by the significant socialist leanings of the WFL's membership.[140] Poverty, women's pay and the division of labour in working class households were topics present in practically every issue of *The Vote* in one form or another, and questions of food arise out these debates as a particularly persistent source of concern.

Vegetarianism, on the other hand, had been suggested as a solution to feeding the poor in the previous century following the Booth and Rowntree study of poverty in London.[141] Where many vegetarians empathically rejected the idea, highlighting the importance of people choosing vegetarianism rather than it being forced upon them, many other vegetarian writers still promoted the diet as thrifty, timesaving and economical.[142] The question of vegetarianism as a solution to poverty was a controversial one. On the other hand, some pointed out that a balanced vegetarian diet was in fact *not* all that cheap as specialist products were expensive and not always that easy to obtain. This view is stressed by many historians of vegetarianism such as Julia Twigg and Colin Spencer.[143] The topic of vegetarianism and poverty was also written about in *The*

[140] Frances (2001), p. 181.
[141] Twigg (1981), Chapter II; Spencer (1994), p. 278.
[142] Gregory (2007), p. 2, 17, 151.
[143] Twigg (1981), Chapter II; Spencer (1994), p. 296.

Vote, but what I find most interesting about it is that the emphasis was again on gender. I will now look at some examples to illustrate this further.

In a lengthy article titled 'A Gastronomic Injustice to Women' the writer S. Gertrude Ford recounts a recent procession she had attended. She carried a banner proposing the question 'Why should a man get 10s and a woman only gets 7s 6d?' to which 'from one of the onlooking men came the answer, prompt and pat, "Because a woman eats less, stupid!"'. Ford then goes on to say that '[t]he suffragist retort that she would certainly have to eat less if she were paid less, whatever the dimensions of her appetite or its ratio to her brother man's, was very much to the point.'[144] She then goes on to expand her argument not just to the quantity, but also the type of food thought sufficient for women. She references a recent study of how 'the respectable working woman of London, several grades above the slum population, really lives' as well as a study on London school children's diet and family budgets.[145] In these studies it soon becomes clear that women are giving up the meat from their portions and often those of the children too, meal after meal, to supply their husbands with the protein. Ford writes:

> It is the eternal law that "mon should tek' the best an' woman hev the rest." He, The Lord of creation, must have "meyt to his dinner" and "summat tasty to his tay"; she, the child-bearer, housekeeper and joint wage-earner, must dispense with any such aids to appetite when there is not enough money to provide a "relish" for both.[146]

This quote illustrates both what the writer believes is happening – men are having all the best bits of a meal alongside the protein, i.e. meat – and her utter rejection of this as an acceptable model of how things *should* be. In another article the position of single women not buying meat due to their low wages is raised and the writer asks: '[i]s it not a mockery for any man to talk of women

[144] *The Vote* on 30 January 1914, p. 11.
[145] *The Vote* on 30 January 1914, p. 11.
[146] *The Vote* on 30 January 1914, p. 11.

preferring poor food to good food when, if she be a wage-earner, she has seldom the option of buying anything but the poorest food in both quality and quantity?'[147]

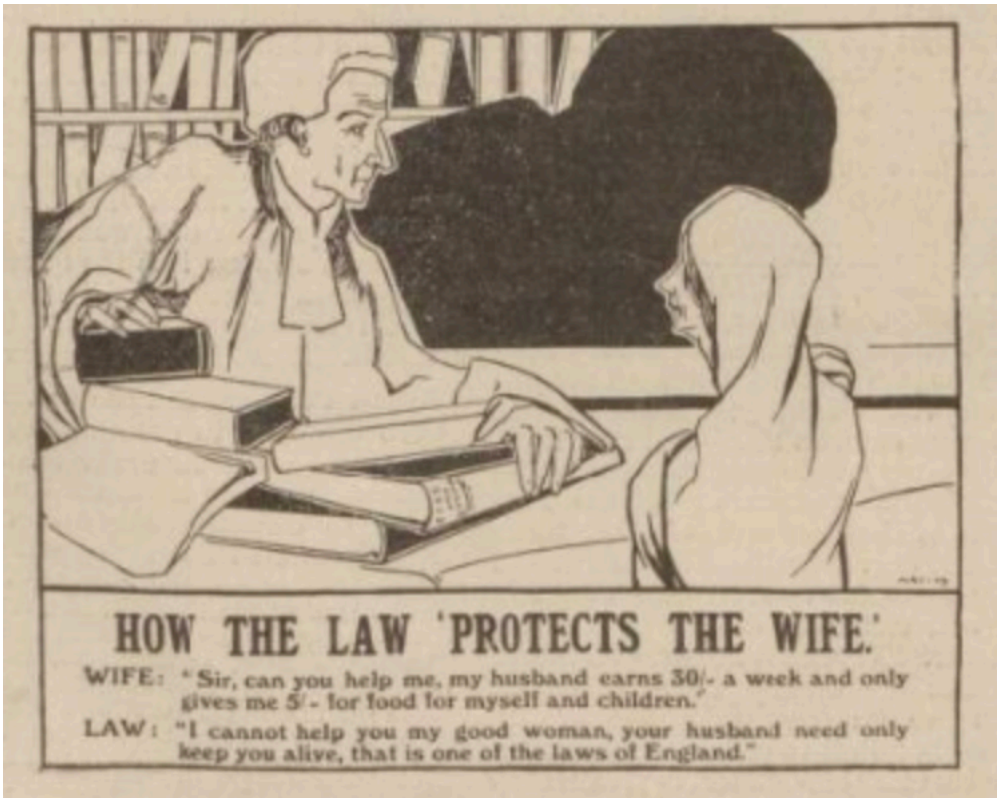

Fig. 6 Cartoon on the front page of The Vote *in 1912 depicting a woman's dependency on her husband's wages.*

Women's dependence and inequality in relation to food can also be seen in the drawing depicted in Fig. 6, where a woman is begging a male judge for money to buy food for herself and her children. Her request is forbidden, because the woman has no direct right to her husband's earnings, he alone decides what is sufficient for her food.

Ford does go on to suggest a solution: 'Vegetarianism on well-planned lines, carefully adjusted to meet their tastes and their pitiful purses, might no doubt nourish both wage-earner and house-mother more effectually'.[148] However, she

[147] *The Vote* on 29 August 1913, pp. 6-7.
[148] *The Vote* on 30 January 1914, p. 11.

is quick to point out that 'the taste for pure food is not created by such an environment, and the workers must have what they can eat.'[149]

What these examples from *The Vote* demonstrate is that the writers did not believe vegetarianism should be pushed on people because they were poor, even if it did offer a more affordable and nourishing diet. More crucially though these examples, as well as those explored in 3.1 above, categorically prove that the women writing about vegetarianism in *The Vote* did not see vegetarianism as particularly a female diet, even if meat culturally held masculine connotations. Women could and did enjoy meat just as much as men. However, feminist-vegetarian writers undeniably employed a feminine vocabulary in connection to vegetarianism. These discourses demonstrate that while vegetarianism was not ubiquitous among the suffragettes, they were certainly aware of how meat was gendered and how contemporary customs and understanding of nutritional requirements favoured men. Vegetarianism was not presented by these women as a diet specifically for women: it would be equally advantageous to either sex.

Therefore the feminisation of vegetarianism is in my opinion connected to the idea of *promoting* qualities generally seen as feminine: the feminist-vegetarians believed that by encouraging greater inter-species equality women were also helping advance greater equality between the sexes and encouraging the wider adoption of sentiments deemed as feminine, such as kindness and compassion. Above all else, though, vegetarianism was to be a voluntary choice of each individual. This, on the other hand, highlights the importance of promoting vegetarianism, and I argue, brings into focus the grassroots level especially. Because vegetarianism was an individual choice, and as we have seen in previous chapters, also seen by many of these writers as a feminist choice, raising awareness and interest on a local level became an essential part of raising awareness and normalising vegetarian lifestyles.

[149] *The Vote* on 30 January 1914, p. 11.

3.3 WFL Local Branches

Lastly in this chapter I will look at the WFL's local vegetarian activity as seen in *The Vote*. Essentially most of the talks and demonstrations discussed previously could be considered to take place on the local level, but of course there are significant differences in scale when looking at an event organised in a function room, a branch meeting in a café or an 'At Home' demonstration literally held in the house of a member as seen in Fig. 7 below.[150] However, I argue that attendance at local meetings was considered compulsory, and therefore the subjects selected for the meetings can be studied in a slightly different light when attending them was not a voluntary activity but rather something pressed from above. Where there is no indication that vegetarianism was a cause supported by the majority of WFL leadership or its members, I however argue that local activity was significant in attempting to promote vegetarian cookery as a worthy alternative to carnivorous diets and that it endeavoured to normalise vegetarian food. The ensuing reporting of local events in *The Vote* raised the visibility of the vegetarian cause to a wider audience, and I argue that this subtle promotion did not go unnoticed by the organised vegetarian movement as we well see in this section.

Local activity was recorded in detail and shared with the readers of *The Vote* in the weekly 'Branch Notes' section. Mostly the emphasis was on official business, which centred on current affairs concerning women but was not limited on simply questions of suffrage, adapting a wider scope instead encompassing things like speeches by visiting members of WFL leadership, developments in the feminist movement as well as administrative and local management matters. In addition there were also a host of other regular features such as jumble sales, talks on a variety of topics and general interest craft and other demonstrations.

That attendance at branch meetings was not seen as optional as becomes clear from this strong message to readers following low turnout at a lecture in 1911. The author states that:

[150] 'At Home' meetings did not, however, mean that they were always held in someone's house.

> members are asked to make it a matter of duty to be present. If we cannot give money or do anything big for the cause, we can, even though it occasionally entails considerable sacrifice (such as refusing invitations to parties and concerts on Thursdays), see that we are in our places at the ordinary branch meetings.[151]

I argue that this gives additional weight to the matters discussed at the meetings, because if everyone capable was expected to attend, they would all also have to listen to all the topics chosen for discussion. This would then imply that issues were selected either due to interest expressed by members of alternatively because they were deemed important by the organisers.

Vegetarian demonstrations and talks took place repeatedly over the years considered in this study, sometimes attaining enough interest to prompt becoming a series of events.[152] *The Vote* reports in December 1912 that 'an exceedingly interesting demonstration of vegetarian cookery was given by Miss McDonald [in Glasgow], assisted by members of the Edinburgh Vegetarian Society.'[153] Another vegetarian cookery demonstration 'was given by Mrs Goodwin, ably assisted by her maid. There was good attendance and… [a]ll present agreed in finding the dishes tempting, and the recipes valuable and pleasantly varied.'[154] On a separate occasion Mrs Goodwin again provided a cookery demonstration where '[t]he practical of the work was undertaken by her cook (diplomé S. Kensington), leaving Mrs Goodwin free to explain different food values etc.'

These entries highlight the class structure of the WFL where the ladies giving the demonstrations naturally leave much of the work to the help. At the same time there was an educational aspect to these demonstrations: Mrs Goodwin

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151 *The Vote* on 4 February 1911, p. 10.
152 *The Vote* on 14 September 1912, p. 13.
153 *The Vote* on 7 December 1912, p. 17.
154 *The Vote* on 5 October 1912, p. 13.

attempted to inform attendees about the vegetarian diet more generally, and members from a local Vegetarian Society offered support to Miss McDonald. Vegetarianism at WFL meetings was clearly part of *somebody's* agenda, and *The Vote*'s coverage of vegetarian events brought the subject into the broader consciousness of WFL members.

Fig 7: An illustration from a WFL 'At Home' cookery demonstration.

Another branch meeting included a lecture on fruitarianism and a speech on the ancient exponents of vegetarianism, the entry in *The Vote* closing with the comment that 'one new member was enrolled' and that 'cakes and vegetarian dishes were on sale.'[155] A report on a vegetarian demonstration finishes by stating that 'there was a ready sale for the dishes when served up', whereas vegetarian lecturer Captain Carey 's wife 'did a splendid trade in some choice vegetarian dishes which they had kindly brought to the meeting, all the proceeds of which went towards the funds of our League.'[156] In 1915 a lecture by Mr Wetterstrand advocating vegetarianism proved so popular that it prompted a further lecture and led to an article in *The Vote* that concluded that '[t]he interest created by these lectures has had a practical issue in the increased sale of health foods, which are a particular feature in our shop.'[157] This also draws attention to

[155] *The Vote* on 20 July 1912, p. 12.
[156] *The Vote* on 20 April 1912, p. 18; 16 May 1913, p. 11.
[157] *The Vote* on 5 February 1915, p. 8;19 February 1915, p. 8.

the not insignificant position held by vegetarian food as a means of collecting funds for the WFL, especially when considered alongside the League's restaurant business.

The importance of local activity has been highlighted by a number of historians of the WFL. Claire Eustance describes the WFL's local branch activity as both an opportunity for the women to continue engaging with interests they already held, whilst simultaneously creating new political identities where these engagements could be tied in with questions of suffrage and feminist endeavours promoting more opportunities for women. She emphasises local culture as proof that suffragettes did not necessarily see themselves as militant above all else, but instead a range of individually meaningful political identities reigned on the local level that then ultimately reflected in the bigger picture of the WFL.[158] WFL historian Hilary Frances, on the other hand, sees local activity as a defining feature in shaping the order of importance allotted to issues as well as strategy on an organisational level.[159] Therefore it seems likely that regional activity reflected local members' interests but that there was also an element of control by the organisers of meetings, and that events held locally could even hold influence on a broader organisational level. Branch meetings, as seen above, also featured opportunities for local fundraising.

In 1913 *The Vote* reported on Mrs Despard's speech given at a Liverpool Vegetarian Society luncheon that I argue is revealing of her vision of reform on a larger scale, and that in this context is also specifically connected to vegetarianism due to the nature of the event where the speech was held. According to *The Vote* she 'spoke of the unity of spirit behind all reform, and described the Women's Movement as a great training ground of reformers of all kinds'.[160] In the next chapter I will concentrate more thoroughly on Charlotte Despard's dream of the future and how it links with vegetarianism, but here it is important to note her idea of the suffrage movement as a 'training ground'. Where Eustace and Frances have emphasised the role of local activity as a shaper

[158] Eustance (1993), pp. 150-151.
[159] Frances (2001), p. 184.
[160] *The Vote* on 21 November 1913, p. 15.

of larger scale policy, I additionally argue that Despard saw local activity as a preparatory force for larger scale societal changes and encouraged it, and vegetarianism was a notable aspect of this.

This educational work did not go unnoticed by the organised vegetarian movement. When Charlotte Despard was named as the first female president of the London Vegetarian Society, *The Vote* reported that

> 'the chairman, Mr F de Vere Summers, emphasized the fact that Mrs Despard's election was not only historical in creating a precedent, but her personality and championship augured increased success for the Society, which welcomes the co-operation of associates who, without undertaking to abstain completely from flesh foods, will aid in promulgating a knowledge of a vegetarian diet.[161]

Charlotte Despard's large-scale vegetarian activism was noted, and no doubt was this view influenced by her known tendency to inject references to vegetarianism in her other activism. In connection to her suffrage activity this was seen in the restaurant business, the WFL shop and the continuous coverage of vegetarian events, lectures and demonstrations that arose from the local level but through *The Vote*'s reporting became part of the national WFL culture. Encouraging people to try vegetarian cookery, learn about vegetarian values and notice for themselves that food could taste pleasing without relying on meat was an important step in reducing the consumption of animals as food.

The last chapter of this thesis will concentrate specifically on Charlotte Despard: her role as the president of the WFL, the editor of *The Vote* as well as her position as arguably the best-known vegetarian in the WFL warrants a more thorough investigation of her and her ideas around the themes of vegetarianism, feminism and gender.

[161] *The Vote* on 2 August 1918, p. 8.

Chapter 4: Charlotte Despard: Spirituality, Vegetarianism and the Future of Gender Relations

4.1 Mrs Despard: A Brief Biography

There is no doubt that Charlotte Despard wielded notable power in the decisions and general direction of the WFL. This final chapter will concentrate on her activism as both a suffragette and a vegetarian. I will argue that vegetarianism was of central importance to both Despard's personal worldview as well as her vision for the future of gender relations. Despard's vegetarianism was thoroughly intertwined with her spiritual beliefs, which were founded in theosophy. I will demonstrate that Charlotte Despard held very progressive views about what constitutes gender, and that fundamentally her activism sprung from a deep longing to make intuitive spirituality, love and thorough equality between the sexes into the founding principles of society. While her views on spiritual awakening and inter-species compassion may not have been representative of WFL views at large, she certainly brought much of her character, beliefs and charisma into the forefront of the organisation and therefore influenced organisational priorities in a major way.

Even though the WFL was in principle a democratic organisation, unlike the WSPU led by the Pankhursts, Charlotte Despard has still been referred to as an autocratic leader by WFL historian Hilary Frances.[162] Mrs Despard, as she was invariably referred to in *The Vote,* was undoubtedly the most visible and regularly named member of the WFL in their newspaper, there is no other character that is as ubiquitously present. Part of this is due to her role as the editor of the newspaper as she often contributed many pages worth of content to the paper, often participating beyond the editorial section. Additionally, she was

[162] Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019; Frances (2000), p. 184.

written about constantly, and the image portrayed by the paper is that of esteemed, sometimes almost cult-like admiration of a charismatic leader. I argue that her role is quite significant in raising awareness of vegetarianism and promoting the cause amongst members of the WFL, and therefore it is necessary to concentrate on her more specifically to understand her vision for the feminist movement of which she was leader. Her devotion to the vegetarian cause seems to be on par with her suffrage activity, peaking in 1918 when she was named the first female president of the London Vegetarian Society.[163]

Fig 8: Edith How-Martyn, Charlotte Despard and Emma Sproson with a policeman in 1914.

Charlotte Despard was an eccentric character, known not only for her suffrage activity where she stood out of the crowd with her sandals and mantilla veil, but also for her ascetic lifestyle and the many causes that she actively pursued. She was outspoken on a range of subjects, mainly to do with social justice, and was

[163] *The Vote* on 2 August 1918, p. 8.

by all accounts a very dynamic individual with an astounding number of interests between which she split her time. Her early life was a somewhat typical existence of a prosperous Victorian woman: born to a wealthy family in 1844, she was educated only to the extent that she could fulfil the role of a Victorian lady, a fate that she often regretted later in life. She married Maximilian Despard in 1870 and started a career as a prolific romantic novelist. The couple never had children. She travelled widely as a young woman in Europe, North America and India, both with her sisters and with her husband.[164] She was widowed fairly young at age 46, and this became an important turning point in her life that also marked her conversion to vegetarianism.[165]

After being widowed Despard took up philanthropic work in London slums, devoting much of her wealth to charity work. Eventually in the 1890s she moved to live in the slum of Nine Elms herself.[166] However, philanthropy was by no means her only subject of interest. Charlotte Despard also became involved in women's suffrage, and at the dawn of the twentieth century she devoted herself to the militant campaign to achieve votes for women. She initially joined the WSPU, and following the split of the WFL from the WSPU in 1907 she became the new organisation's president and soon also the editor of its newspaper. Despard was a converted Catholic but also a theosophist.[167] She was active in the vegetarian movement with both the Manchester Vegetarian Society and the London Vegetarian Society.[168] Despard was also an outspoken pacifist, and additionally participated in the work of a number of animal protection charities including the Canine Defence League, Our Dumb Friends' League and a variety of anti-vivisection groups.[169] Socialism had been a longstanding interest of

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[164] Linklater (1980); Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019.
[165] Linklater (1980), p. 62.
[166] Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019
[167] Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019
[168] *The Vote* on 2 August 1918, p. 8, 21 November 1913.
[169] Pacifism: Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0

Despard's, but it was only following the partial success of the suffrage campaign in 1918 when she decided to shift her emphasis more from women's suffrage towards that cause.[170] In her various pursuits Despard confessed to being deeply influenced by radical poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, himself a famous vegetarian.[171] In her diary from 1915 it is clear that her life was built around activism, which on a daily basis took her to different parts of the country on campaigning and lecture tours as well as work-related social calls. [172]

Despard's belief in the importance of enlightening others and spreading one's message is a central point of her book, *Theosophy and the Woman's Movement,* which amongst other topics also discusses her views on vegetarianism. She certainly seems to have lived according to her beliefs, and her extremely busy schedule and frequent public appearances are also reflected in *The Vote* where every week Mrs Despard has travelled the country at various events despite her advanced age. I believe that it was specifically the theosophical influence that helped shape Charlotte Despard's feminism, vegetarianism and spiritual beliefs, and therefore we will now turn to explore her involvement with theosophy and spirituality to better understand her world view.

4.2 Vegetarianism, Theosophy and Spirituality

Theosophy is a movement often connected to vegetarianism.[173] Suffragettes were significantly more likely to be theosophists than the general population: Dixon estimates that 10% of active suffragettes were also members of the Theosophical Society (hereon referred to as TS).[174] Theosophy is a visible undercurrent in *The* Vote with frequent advertisements for lectures and talks, albeit often these were organised by the TS or other providers. Occasionally

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001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019; animal charities: Kean (1998), pp. 137, 150, 163.

[170] Mulvihill (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37356 last accessed 16.4.2019.

[171] Dixon (2004), pp. 185-6.

[172] See Charlotte Despard's diary for 1913, https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/diary-charlotte-despard-1913, last visited 18/04/2019.

[173] See for example Vornanen (2007) p. 46; Dixon (2001), p. 10; Gregory (2007), p. 104.

[174] Dixon (2001), pp. 5-6.

theosophical presentations or lectures were also held at branch meetings. The TS endorsed vegetarianism and encouraged it for members, but it was by no means a formal requirement.[175] Despard states that '[t]hose who join the Theosophical Society are required to take one pledge – and one only. It is the acceptance of the truth of Brotherhood – not theoretically alone, but practically. Our first object is " to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex or colour."'[176] Dixon suggests that it is particularly the accommodating nature of the society that attracted a following which was really rather heterogenic in its beliefs: according to Dixon it was possible to follow an esoteric and mystical belief system that was closely associated with Eastern religions such as Buddhism or Hinduism, whilst at the same time one could consider oneself to be a devout Christian and still fit into the framework of the society just as well.[177] For Charlotte Despard, theosophy formed a central part of her life philosophy, and it was specifically this loose framework that opened a new way for her to fit a mixture of Christian, non-Christian, vaguely Eastern and esoteric beliefs into a more culturally acceptable package. This combination of moral and spiritual guidance moulded by her theosophical beliefs was the guiding force driving practically all her activism.

Theosophy and the Woman's Movement is in places confusing reading for someone not aware of the comfortable way the TS made room for a wide array of different beliefs. Despard liberally mixes ideas drawn from a variety of faiths, occasionally quoting the Bible before moving on to allude to quite clearly non-Christian concepts such as the transmigration of souls and reincarnation.[178] Hindu- and Buddhist influences are apparent in the text, and overall the central message seems to be Despard's belief in the rise of a new world order and a type of spiritual awakening, in which vegetarianism plays a key role. She believes that many of the movements she engages with –vegetarianism, women's suffrage, theosophy – together form a greater whole, and that they are all fundamentally

[175] Besant (1913), p. 4.
[176] Despard (1913), p. 7.
[177] Dixon (2001), p. 4.
[178] These references are apparent throughout the book, but see for example Despard (1913) pp. 6-7, p. 21, p. 30.

tied to each other in pursuit of the larger goal of an awakened, more empathetic and equal society.[179] Vegetarianism for Despard is inseparably tied to the cause of women's suffrage:

> The awakened instinct which feels the call of the sub-human, which says: -- 'I am the voice of the voiceless. Through me the dumb will speak.' is a modern phenomenon that cannot be denied. It works itself out as food reform on one hand, and, on the other, in strong protest against the cruel methods of experimental research. Both of these are in close unison with the demands being made by woman.[180]

In this quote Despard makes a connection between vegetarianism and anti-vivisection, but the core of the message seems to be that to her the cruelty towards animals is parallel to the subjugation of women. The poem cited here is by Ella Wilcox Wheeler, and it was very commonly used by various animal rights activists of the era.[181] Politically both women and animals were silenced, but due to her humanity woman could ask for mercy for the animals. Above all Despard seems to highlight the ethical aspect of refusing to participate in behaviours that harm and objectify people *or* animals.

Despard's belief in equality and universal respect for all life forms reflects the main principle of theosophy, but it also goes a long way to explain something of her personal devotion to activism. Through *The Vote* it is clear she also fought for others seemingly without a voice, such as poor children or victims of incest and domestic and sexual abuse. Despard's devotion and passion for her various causes comes across in her writing in *The Vote,* but she does appear to tone down her theosophical and spiritual beliefs when writing for the newspaper. She felt strongly about not just preaching behind a curtain of middle class comforts, but instead she chose to live with the poor in the slums and lead an austere,

[179] Despard (1913), but also Dixon (2001) has confirmed the connection of these movements.
[180] Despard (1913), p. 44
[181] Wilson (2017), pp. 62-3; Kean (1998), p. 127.

ascetic lifestyle.[182] She shares on the hardships of the people she is fighting for, and through her own ascetism and hunger strikes in prison she is partaking in the pain of the powerless, as one of their own. She stresses the importance of spreading the message of theosophy: '[one] has to develop such powers as will enable him, not only himself to climb the ladder of life, but to help forward the spiritual evolution of the world.'[183]

Her worldview promotes individual responsibility in both looking after the weak or the 'voiceless', and also trying to lift others as one is taking greater charge of one's spirituality, education and moral choices. This ties in with the introspective, individualistic strain in Edwardian feminism identified by Delap: rather than simply concentrating on the rights of an individual, it also includes the responsibilities they have.[184] This individualism, therefore, is not self-centred, but instead collectively minded. Only together do responsibility and individual choice create strength, because it is through collective action – brotherhood, or perhaps sisterhood would be more appropriate here – that each person is individually making personal contributions to effect fundamental changes in society. Additionally this belief in a type of collective individualism is tied in with Despard's spiritual beliefs. She writes that:

> With this individual responsibility we have another point insisted on, that life itself is one and that the human spirit, manifesting in the physical universe through the veil of flesh, is actually a ray of the Divine, passing on from life to life and carrying with it the sum of experience, to be wrought into qualities in the spiritual worlds.[185]

The oneness of all being is the key principle here and also goes on to explain the individual and collective approach to societal change she preaches:

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[182] Linklater (19180), p. 62.
[183] Despard (1913), p. 26.
[184] Delap (2004), pp. 116-117.
[185] Despard (1913), p. 21.

> The fundamental principle of life in human relations was given by one of the ancient seers when he said: "Thou shalt not separate thy being from Being and the rest; but merge the ocean in the drop – the drop within the ocean. So shalt thou be in full accord *with all that lives;* bear love to men as though they were brother-pupils, disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.[186]

Individuals must think of the community – of humanity - at large because essentially they are all the same, they are all part of the whole: what harms one, harms everyone. In *Theosophy and the Woman's Movement* the prose is undulating, switching between practical matters and esoteric, mystical theorisations of spiritual nature. The reasons for choosing vegetarianism are deeply interwoven with spiritual and ethical beliefs as well as feminist ones, but above all else is the idea of all creation as one. Individual responsibility and spiritual development are at the forefront of the reasons why people should adapt a vegetarian lifestyle, because before people realise the interconnectedness of all life there cannot be an awakening. Despard sums this up in her introduction:

> The object of this book will be to show that the woman's movement, isolated and phenomenal as it may seem to be, does not stand alone, but with the other movements of the time is preparing for the "one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves."[187]

This quote sheds light on Despard's unshakeable devotion to activism of many kinds. She believed that in striving for greater equality - between the sexes and well as between humans and animals - people were moving towards a spiritual

[186] Despard (1913), p. 50, italics as in the original text.
[187] Despard (1913), p. 2.

event, the next level, a connection with God which would mark the beginning of a new era. Empathy, kindness and love were the key components of change for Charlotte Despard, and in her vision repairing the imbalance in gender relations as well as the unjust balance of power between animals and humans were central components of changing society. Vegetarianism, therefore, was a fundamental goal to obtain change on a large scale, and she voices her opinions on the importance of 'food reform on a large scale' as one of the vital building blocks of successfully changing society in *The Vote* just as she does in her theosophical writing, only with less emphasis on spirituality.[188]I will now move on to look at Charlotte Despard's thoughts on gender in the light of vegetarianism.

4.3 Charlotte Despard and Visions of Gender

Where *The Vote* announced its objective to be an instrument of feminist reporting on a scale stretching beyond questions of suffrage, Charlotte Despard herself certainly envisaged her personal feminism as an even more fundamentally revolutionising force as we have seen in section 4.2 above. Francis notes that the aim of the WFL was to 'transform gender relationships.'[189] Dixon, on the other hand, states that Despard's ultimate goal was 'the enfranchisement of spirituality' and that her feminism was not even really definable as political but spiritual.[190] Twigg writes about the attempt to re-think the value placed on 'feminine' qualities and to position them alongside or even above the 'masculine' ones that currently resided over them in importance.[191] But to be able to thoroughly understand why Despard referred to vegetarianism in terms of gender and how she saw the future arrangement of gender relationships, we must first understand what she thought about gender. What, essentially, were 'men' and 'women'?

In 1910 Charlotte Despard stated that:

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[188] *The Vote* on 27 April 1917, p. 5.
[189] Frances (2000), p. 181, 184.
[190] Dixon (2001), pp. xiv, 180.
[191] Twigg (1981), Chapter IV.

> The best of men and the best of women are all the same in one sense. The best men have a great deal of the woman in them; the best women have a great deal of the man in them.[192]

This points to an understanding of gender where men and women are not so different from each other. Her statement on how she sees the future of the feminism further illustrates this:

> I am not a feminist – indeed I hate the very word. It is my earnest hope that the present women's movement will prove to be a passing phase and that the day is not far distant when it will merge with the men's movement.[193]

Despard did not believe in any fundamental difference between men and women. Indeed, she seems to believe above all in humanity as the definitive descriptor that should be used. This was not entirely novel, as Dixon brings up the belief among many theosophists that differentiations based on sex were but vaguely illuminating of any person's characteristics – that gender was almost irrelevant.[194]

Dixon has analysed theosophy particularly in relation to gender and femininity, and mentions one Edwardian theosophist's description of gender as a magnet: both men and women have a positive and a negative side, but one side is more dominant than the other.[195] I found this metaphor interesting as it seemed to illuminate the way Despard understands gender. She concentrates on *qualities* that she associates more with either femininity or masculinity rather than any essential idea of what men or women are. However, where she calls these

[192] Quoted in Kean (1998), p. 163.
[193] Quoted in Matheson-Pollock and Graham-Matheson (2020), p. 5 and Dixon (2001), p. 37.
[194] Dixon (2001), p. 183, but this matter is discussed in more depth on pages 182-4.
[195] Dixon (2001), p. 183.

qualities feminine or masculine, they are expressed by both sexes, only in varying amounts. Despard therefore sees gender almost as on a scale, where different people have different balances of qualities. This, I believe, is a fairly progressive interpretation of gender, but it is easily disguised behind her vividly religious and mystical style of writing and grand speculation of an approaching spiritual awakening. And it is true that Despard's idea of gender is inseparably entwined with her spiritualism. She writes that:

> The body which is merely the temporary form of the indwelling spirit, functions here through sex. The traveller, bringing his sheaves with him, as he passes from life to life, may come to-day as a man and in the distant tomorrow as a woman.[196]

She believes in reincarnation, and on the scale of eternity gender is but a minor part of the whole spiritual being, a feature that shifts in each life and body that the spirit is reincarnated into. Gender is not insignificant, but it is not fixed, either. Gender is a sliding scale, and Despard seems to be saying that each person has the *potential* to express features from both the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' stock in variable amounts. The fact that she still labels qualities as feminine or masculine speaks of an understanding where certain features are connected to sex on some level, but the spirit underneath it all is androgynous.[197]

This is very interesting because through *The Vote* Despard still very much concentrates on women and men as separate sexes, as is natural for the leader of a suffrage organisation. Yet I believe this purely reflected the current state of affairs for her rather than a belief in sex as something fixed or separate from gender. In *Theosophy and the Woman's Movement* Despard reflects on the reasons behind the current inequality in gender relations, and comes to the conclusion that gender roles and the perceived difference in the behaviour of men and women results from long-lasting imbalances of power that have

[196] Despard (1913), pp. 6-7.
[197] Also Dixon (2001) has discussed the theosophical objective of spiritual androgyny in 'Divine Feminine', p. 184.

moulded people's behaviour patters. Therefore characteristically gendered behaviours do not so much result from inherent biological, fixed differences rather than learned behaviour.[198] Despard however certainly seems to portray what she sees as feminine characteristics in a more positive light than those classified as masculine, and although she writes at length about men and women being two sides of the same, she still appears to attribute greater intuition and potential for change specifically in women. Twigg points out that it was commonly believed that women were more spiritual and 'further evolved' than men, and support for this belief comes across when reading *The Vote*.[199]

To bring the focus back to vegetarianism, one might also wonder why Despard describes vegetarianism as a woman's question if she simultaneously seems to believe in a gender scale rather than men and women as essentially separate from each other. I believe that for Despard vegetarianism as a feminist issue is tied very much to the *current* state of woman: it is degrading she should have to prepare meat, but ultimately vegetarianism is not more important to women than men. C*urrently* women are treated like animals and it is left to them to prepare the flesh of those animals that have been robbed of their freedom and, eventually, lives. But just as feminism, it is a cause only *temporarily* connected with women.

Despard sees both sexes as two sides of the same, and feminism is only a momentary diversion to get to a state of equality. So it is with vegetarianism: women should take interest in the wellbeing of animals due to their own subjugated position, but eventually the welfare and freedom of animals is a question for all humanity regardless of gender. And one could reason that because women possess significant power over decisions of food, their vegetarianism will also have widespread consequences for their families and gradually the society at large. It is through the wider adaptation of the feminine values of love and empathy that the greater population is to become enlightened

[198] Despard (1913), pp. 11-16
[199] Twigg (1981), Chapter IV.

on this quest. This is really condensed by this final quote from Charlotte Despard:

> The woman's movement is linked by a thread of love… it has opened women up to each other… The vote may go, parliament may go, but love will remain – spiritual love is the women's movement.[200]

This quote draws attention to Despard's commitment to her spiritual beliefs and vision above all else. I also think it indirectly draws attention to her fundamental belief in vegetarianism. The love that Despard envisioned stretches beyond humanity, and her commitment to non-violence is at the very heart of the expression of love. This can be seen in Despard breaking away from the WSPU in objection to their violent militancy, her pacifism during the war years, her tireless campaigning for the oppressed and the underdogs: the poor, the women, the children and animals. I believe one final expression of the place of vegetarianism for Mrs Despard can be seen in this advertisement for The London Vegetarian Association and the London Vegetarian Society that ran in a number if issues of *The Vote* in 1918.


Food Reform is at the Root of all Social Reform.

THE LONDON VEGETARIAN ASSOCIATION

(*President:* Arnold F. Hills, Esq.),

and

THE LONDON VEGETARIAN SOCIETY

(*President:* Mrs. Despard)

8, John Street, Adelphi, W.C.2.

Send Lecturers and Cookery Demonstrators; Supply information on Diet, Cookery Books, Free Literature and Advice to all Enquirers. Food Reform is a subject of paramount importance to women.

Address all communications to the Secretary:
CHARLES MONTEFIORE.

Fig. 9: An advertisement in The Vote *proclaiming 'Food Reform is at the Root of all Social Reform' from 1918.*

[200] Quoted in Dixon (2001), p. 205.

The banner text at the top proclaims that 'Food Reform is at the Root of all Social Reform', under which the organisations and their presidents, including Mrs Despard, are listed. Where violence and oppression were detestable forces that scuppered progress, love and compassion brought with them a promise of a more enlightened and equal tomorrow. And for Despard, the violence against animals generated the moral regression that led to these harmful acts: violence and oppression towards any living creature only bred more of the same. And it is for this reason that I believe vegetarianism really was at the root of all reform for Charlotte Despard, because as long as people continue to kill and oppress animals, killing and oppression are deemed acceptable in society.

I argue that Despard's unshakeable devotion vegetarianism undoubtedly increased the visibility of vegetarianism amongst the membership of the WFL and the readers of *The Vote,* and it also influenced the WFL's official ventures being vegetarian. However, it alone cannot be responsible for the topic of vegetarianism remaining consistently visible in *The Vote* throughout the years looked at in this thesis. And, while vegetarianism as well as meat were certainly discussed in a gendered way, it was not necessarily Charlotte Despard's vision that guided all this discussion. Writers in *The* Vote came to reject some of the gendered notions attached to nutritional requirements and meat, but there is no indication that Despard's idea of gender being but a scale of attributes was a dominant view among WFL members. While I believe the discourses on vegetarianism envisioned a future state of affairs that differed greatly from the present, which was inclusive of changes in the balance of power between the sexes, the focus in *The* Vote was still heavily on highlighting the current inequalities between the sexes. I will now move on to the final chapter to make my conclusions on this topic.

Conclusion

Through *The Vote* vegetarianism emerges as a persistently visible topic amongst the suffragettes of the WFL. It is clear through the advertising and general prominence of the topic that vegetarianism was not only dictated from above as an important feminist issue to be discussed due to Charlotte Despard's personal convictions, but indeed a significant amount of WFL membership was vegetarian. It could be that the notable vegetarian population of the WFL was owing in part to its pacifist and anti-violent stance, which might have attracted vegetarians due to the commonality of anti-violent sentiments among people of vegetarian convictions. However, vegetarianism was also formally made part of WFL business. While there was no expectation of vegetarianism from members, the WFL's choice of meeting places as well as its official shop, its reasonably expansive involvement in the vegetarian restaurant business as well as the promotion of vegetarianism in formal WFL events and through *The Vote* do demonstrate that the cause was endorsed and encouraged by at least some of the WFL executive body as well as a notable enough portion of other members. Some of the vegetarian activity was also clearly initiated by local support and interest in the topic.

A gendered rhetoric was employed by the writers on vegetarianism considered in this thesis. Where women utilised a vocabulary that connected qualities deemed as feminine to vegetarianism, men's texts were notably devoid of these. The sample of men's writing studied here is extremely limited, but it however points to interestingly varied outlooks split along the gender lines amongst vegetarian writers of this era. Where men's texts on vegetarianism highlighted rationality, ethics and health, women expressed more emotive reasoning that did, however, often include ethical and health-based arguments hidden behind the sentiment. The aspect of gender was significantly more highlighted by women writers. Cultural associations connected to meat were explored in *The Vote,* but the notion of meat as a masculine food was rejected, nor was it

accepted that women's nutritional requirements radically different from those of men. Vegetarianism was therefore not seen as a woman's diet as much as it was considered to be a women's *cause.* Vegetarian writing alluded to female empowerment, largely due to the power already wielded over food-related decisions and expertise. It was widely believed amongst the women considered in this thesis that the oppression of animals was analogous to the subjugation of women, and that widespread adoption of vegetarianism would lead to greater equality of the sexes as well as between humans and non-human animals.

The adoption of vegetarianism was seen as transformative on a personal as well as societal scale. Where meat is often presented as a source of illness and vice, vegetarianism has a purifying and health-giving effect. Meat, on the other hand, was connected to moral degradation, and it was seen to increase violent behavior, alcoholic excess and sexual promiscuity. Vegetarian diets would remove the polluting effects of meat, creating a population of milder, temperate and altogether more civilized people.

The WFL engaged enthusiastically with questions of class inequality. The suffragettes did not promote vegetarianism as a solution to poverty, but instead highlighted the importance of individual choice. This was reflected in the WFL's formal vegetarian activity, which adopted a very grassroots approach that highlighted educating people about the diet and normalizing vegetarian food through its own restaurants and other food ventures. Interestingly, there is practically no mention of race equality in the vegetarian writing of *The Vote,* although much of vegetarian literature generally borrowed from and adapted aspects of Asian religions. Vegetarianism was also connected to gendered nationalism. Where women were expected to surrender their claim to meat during times of scarcity, men's vegetarianism was seen as unpatriotic and provocative. *The Vote*'s wartime writing discussed vegetarianism in relation to national fitness and the future of the empire highlighting gender, the emphasis being on motherhood and food choices offered in childhood.

Charlotte Despard's role was significant in the promotion of vegetarianism amongst the membership of the WFL. She highlighted the power of individuals to transform the society at large through their personal choices, a view that was also prominent amongst many of the writers considered in this thesis. She thought in a different time scale to most people, her logic spanning the infinite cycle of lives rather than being limited to the temporal restrictions of a human lifetime. Through her ultimate belief in love she came to object all kids of violence and oppression, and vegetarianism was an inseparable aspect of her pacifist, empathetic and spiritually awakened vision for the future.

Despard firmly believed in spreading the gospel of vegetarianism as part of her spiritual conviction, and she rejoiced in the WFL's ability to encourage activism also reaching beyond questions of suffrage or even feminism. While Despard helped raise the profile of vegetarianism amongst members of the WFL as well as the greater public, there is no implication that her ideas of gender and spiritualism were shared by the membership of the WFL at large. However, I argue that the idea of vegetarianism as an instrument of advancing greater equality *was* widely accepted among the women writing about vegetarianism in *The Vote*, and therefore vegetarianism was popularly connected to the suffragettes for a good reason because many of them did indeed see vegetarianism as a feminist act.

I believe that this study brings new perspectives into understanding the WFL's involvement with vegetarianism and highlights further the way vegetarianism and meat eating were gendered in a feminist context, as well as to some extent outside of it in the Edwardian period and during World War I. Women writing for *The Vote* identified and rejected widespread beliefs about women's lesser nutritional requirements and meat being more important to men, and whilst vegetarianism was believed to be important to women it was not seen to be a diet just *for* women. Discourses in *The Vote* demonstrate that the widespread adoption of vegetarianism was believed to be beneficial to society as it was thought to advance equality between the sexes, make people healthier, reduce

violent behaviour and alcoholism and simultaneously promote a more compassionate society.

I argue that the WFL engaged with vegetarianism on a more significant scale than has previously been understood. Encouraging vegetarianism is not presented in any manifesto as one of the WFL's objectives, and it appears that the League's extensive but reasonably subtle involvement in educating its members and, to some extent, the public about the benefits and delicacy of vegetarian cooking has been largely overlooked. Vegetarian food appears to have held a noteworthy position as a revenue builder through the WFL's restaurants, shop and also, to some extent, events. The WFL expected attendance from members at local meetings, which increased the significance of the vegetarian education and demonstrations offered at these gatherings. While the vegetarian events may sometimes have been instigated at local level, they also involved the support of event organisers, and further were reported to the readership of *The Vote* on a national scale. The WFL's involvement with vegetarianism sought to educate people and normalise vegetarianism, on a local as well as broader organisational level. Therefore, I argue that vegetarianism was indeed a significant undercurrent in WFL activity, both amongst its membership as well as on an organisational level, and that the League's vegetarian engagements were a notable part of the WFL's attempt to change society from the bottom up, highlighting the fact that both choice and responsibility rested on each individual. The key to change was believed to be in the women's hands.

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Figure 1: Caricature of suffragettes, part of a series of cards. https://womanandhersphere.com/tag/suffragettes-and-vegetarianism/ last visited 12.4.2019

Figure 2: Advertisements from The Vote in 1910 and 1917. *The Vote* on 11 May 1917, p. 8 and 25 April 1910, p. 19.

Figure 3: An advertisement for Gardenia Health Food Restaurant, *The Vote* on 15 April 1911, p. 1.

Fig. 4: A leaflet advertising the WFL Settlement in Nine Elms, Leaflet title: Children's Vegetarian Restaurants. Women's Freedom League under Suffrage

And Politics, Manuscript Number S. AND P. 9/2, Microfilm Reel # 83, Imperial War Museum Library, Gale Document Number GALE|SC5108097674.

Figure 5: An advertisement for The Eustace Miles Restaurant in The Vote in 1910, *The Vote* on 12 March 1912, p. 1.

Figure 6: Cartoon on the front page of *The Vote* in 1912 depicting a woman's dependency on her husband's wages, *The Vote* on 25 May 1912, p. 1.

Figure 7: An illustration from a WFL 'At Home' cookery demonstration, *The Vote* on 9 April 1910, p. 11.

Figure 8: Edith How-Martyn, Charlotte Despard and Emma Sproson with a policeman in 1914, image from the LSE Women's Collection, published on Flicr. No known copyright. https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/31304998788/in/photolist-W2TZBo-B2LQoR-8FXhcK-K97xzo-2gC7XmW-AJbmdm-PGjiuq-2bfSddk-HSHEnc-6aySyo-6aySyf-6516Mt-QVcwi6-QJKbhn-dn2xBS-pA7WCc-sAaDDP-6LkFkV-23oiobD-DuoQqC-RtP65G-EoT9JU-bx5xUt-AEPKqo-KgQghX-tCKTRn-ouVn7e-21rM63H-7kUTuF-6516D2-987vkJ-91ULg5-GCGTiS-91RzWe-91RA7D-91RA3V-dMgTv8-24fseg8-Q2VfXW-Ljtgqv-2iTxRfm-nMHSvg-2jqkp7Y-2jqmCfW, last accessed 24.9.2020.

Figure 9: An advertisement in *The Vote* proclaiming 'Food Reform is at the Root of all Social Reform' from 1918, *The Vote* on 1 November 1918, p. 7.